

THE AMERICAN Prospect

LIBERAL INTELLIGENCE

MARCH 2005

Asra Q. Nomani:
Islam in America

Will Hutton on the
lessons of Galbraith

BETWEEN CHOMSKY & CHENEY

American power in the
service of liberal ideals

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Addicted to China

CLYDE PRESTOWITZ



The Realist Antidote

ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI



Can the Democrats Lead?

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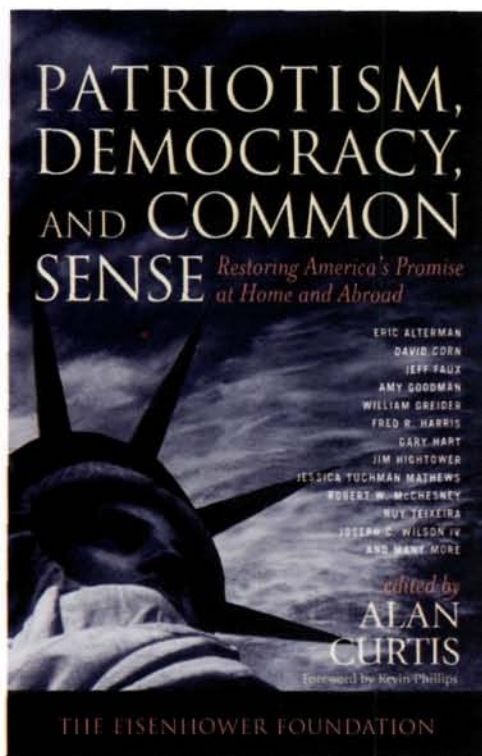
Patriotism, Democracy, and Common Sense

Restoring America's Promise at Home and Abroad

An Eisenhower Foundation Report

By Alan Curtis, Eric Alterman, David Corn, Jeff Faux
Amy Goodman, William Greider, Fred R. Harris
Gary Hart, Jim Hightower, Joseph C. Wilson IV and others.

In the late 1960s, the bipartisan Eisenhower Violence Commission, formed by President Johnson and extended by President Nixon, warned that most civilizations have fallen less from external assault than from internal decay.



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THE AMERICAN Prospect

LIBERAL INTELLIGENCE

"Domestic policy can only lose
elections. Foreign policy can
kill us all." —JOHN F. KENNEDY

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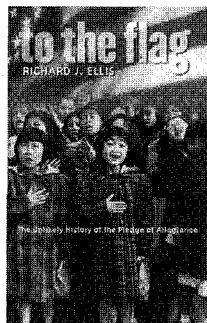
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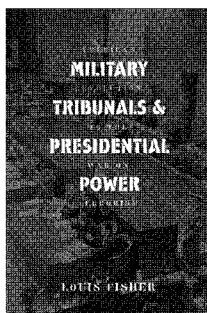
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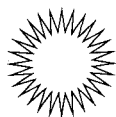
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Bush's Tipping Point

THE GREAT SOCIAL SECURITY BATTLE OF 2005 COULD well be remembered as the tipping point that ended George W. Bush's remarkable winning streak. It's now clear that Democrats are not about to provide Bush bipartisan cover for privatization. Even usually reliable

Republicans are putting some distance between themselves and the president.

Bush and his allies control the legislative calendar, but for once, time is not on Bush's side. Privatization might have won a quick legislative victory had Bush just rammed a bill through Congress on the momentum of his election win. But the longer the privatization proposal twists in the wind, the more the media, wavering Republicans, and ordinary voters become conversant with the details—and the worse the plan looks. The Democrats had put their post-election grief behind them by late February and recovered some energy, and the prospect of defeating Bush on a signature proposal has been quite a tonic for them. After a slow start, the AFL-CIO, AARP, and the Democratic Party itself are delivering some nice counterpunches.

One by one, key Republicans have distanced themselves from the idea, including House Speaker Dennis Hastert and Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist. Usually friendly columnists such as David Brooks in *The New York Times* and Sebastian Mallaby in *The Washington Post* have written unfriendly columns, with Brooks proposing Democratic-sounding add-on private accounts as a compromise and Mallaby warning of the hidden Miceys in Bush's approach. As Bush's budget was unveiled and dissected, the enormity of the deficit problem got a good deal of attention, and the prospect of an additional \$2 trillion of debt struck most budget observers as insane. A bill has not even been

introduced, and there is already the pungent reek of a dead idea.

It could be the beginning of a trend. There is plenty in the budget that troubles moderate Republicans as well as Democrats. Bush's proposal to cut veterans' benefits, in the midst of a shooting war, will receive bipartisan resistance. His attempt to cut farm subsidies may be good policy, but it is difficult politics.

Meanwhile, his effort to turn Medicaid into a capped block grant is producing bipartisan opposition from governors. As employers reduce the coverage of private health insurance, and as freestanding insurance becomes ever more unaffordable, Medicaid is the only insurance available to more and more Americans—and an on-going drain on state budgets. Bush's Medicare drug program now turns out to cost upward of \$700 billion, rather than the \$400 billion that was forecast, because the bill, written to drug-industry specifications, explicitly prohibits the government from negotiating bulk prices with drug companies. Senators Edward Kennedy and John McCain are leading a bipartisan effort to repeal this provision. Meanwhile, on the intelligence front, Senators Pat Roberts and Jay Rockefeller are collaborating across party lines to hold

a formal inquiry into the CIA's handling of terrorism suspects.

Bush's desire to radically restructure the tax system by shifting taxes from income to consumption could also run into a bipartisan buzz saw. The details will not be unveiled until fall, when a presidential commission is due to report. But any conceivable consumption tax will raise taxes on ordinary wage earners, while reducing them on wealthy investors. Unlike Bush's previous tax cuts for the well-heeled, this one cannot contain sweeteners for ordinary wage earners, because that would require even bigger deficits.

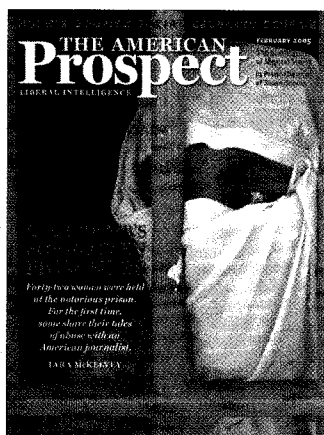
In short, despite his election win and his increased majorities in both chambers of Congress, Bush's winning streak is in big trouble in two fronts. First, his latest round of policy proposals is splitting his own base while unifying the Democrats. Second, the budgetary chickens are coming home to roost sooner than anticipated. Bush's whole game was to make sure that the most costly aspects of his tax and program cuts would not bite until after he left office. But it's apparent now that the bombs designed to detonate on his successor's watch are going off prematurely, at the very beginning of his second term.

***President Bush
has yet to lose a
major legislative
battle. That may
soon change—and
more than once.***

It is astounding how the legislative magic and party discipline can quickly disappear once a chief executive becomes a lame duck. As soon as Republicans find that they can oppose a White House priority without being struck dead, they will find it easier to do it again. Conversely, the

often feckless Democrats are learning in the Social Security battle that there is just no substitute for party unity. Ironically, Bush's second term could be a time for the bipartisanship that he falsely promised in 2001—not the fig-leaf kind but the real article. And this bipartisanship would be in opposition to Bush's own policies. **TAP**

— ROBERT KUTTNER



**Moore was a
significant factor
in energizing
young people to
vote for Kerry.**

—DANNY GOLDBERG
NEW YORK, NY

More Moore

ALTHOUGH HE MILDLY rebukes their conclusions, Mark Leon Goldberg's piece ["Is Moore Less?" February 2005] about the Republicans' and conservative Democrats' attempts to demonize Michael Moore gives credence to irrational arguments and ignores many facts.

Comparing Moore to Sister Souljah is absurd. She was an unknown rapper and he is an Oscar-winning filmmaker, the author of two No. 1 best-selling books, and the maker of the most successful documentary in history. Perhaps Goldberg means that Bill Clinton's Sister Souljah attack was really aimed at the Reverend Jesse Jackson, who sponsored the conference, but Clinton never attacked Jackson personally. On the contrary, he made peace with him and frequently invited him to the White House.

More significantly, Clinton attacked a specific thing that Sister Souljah said, which was that it would have made more sense for rioting African Americans to attack white neighborhoods than black ones. Assuming that she meant this literally, there was neither a serious moral argument nor any political constituency for this view.

Moore is being attacked because he opposed the war in Iraq and because he opposes the Bush foreign policy of empire-building. This point of view has a compelling intellectual and moral argument in its favor. In the context of a strategic analysis of the Democratic Party, Moore's fierce opposition to Bush's foreign policy represents the views of the vast majority of the 58 million people who voted for John Kerry and many who didn't—precisely because Kerry insisted he still would have voted for the war even with the knowledge that there were no weapons of mass destruction.

It is Cokie Roberts, far more than Michael Moore, who exemplifies "all of the things people hate about Democrats."

To call Peter Beinart's *New Republic* piece "thoughtful" is to legitimize someone who wants to walk away from most actual Democrats in order to curry favor with a tiny coterie of Washington insiders who, for good reason, have a following that is maybe one one-hundredth of that enjoyed by Moore or MoveOn. Beinart's argument has nothing to do with Moore's filmmaking or writ-

ing skills, nor with his position on any domestic issue. It has to do with Moore's opposition to the foreign policy of Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz. If people who are revolted by that policy want a "positive" alternative, there are numerous better visions, many of which have been published in the *Prospect*, that are only "negative" in the sense that they oppose torture as a sanctioned state tactic and violence that, many of us feel, creates more terrorists than it kills.

One need not agree with everything Michael Moore has said to recognize that he is a huge help to the Democrats. He was the person singly most responsible for minimizing Ralph Nader's vote in 2004. He was unrelenting in his pro-Kerry advocacy during the campaign, when many in the Democratic base despaired at Kerry's equivocations on issues near and dear to them. He helped ignite the unprecedented activism that kept the Democrats from being victims of a Reagan-like landslide. He was a significant factor in energizing young people to vote for Kerry. Voters under 30 preferred Kerry by 9 points, and if they had been the only people who voted, red states such as Virginia, North Carolina, Missouri, and Arkansas would have gone for Kerry.

Finally, Goldberg gets it wrong when he describes how Republicans treat their populist advocates. Rush Limbaugh visited the White Houses of both Presidents Bush, and Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson are treated with infinitely more respect from mainstream Republi-

cans than Michael Moore and MoveOn get from Washington Democratic "leaders."

DANNY GOLDBERG
New York, NY

Mark Leon Goldberg responds: Danny Goldberg makes some very fair points, and I should say that I greatly admire Moore's steadfast commitment to progressive causes. If *Fahrenheit 9/11* made Bush skeptics of some number of Americans who would otherwise not have been, great. We also agree—wholeheartedly—on Cokie Roberts, whom I used merely for the purpose of distilling the conventional wisdom.

But I think the question of whether Moore inspired more votes for the Democrats than he cost is open to debate. The data necessary to make this calculation simply do not exist. Moore probably did help persuade fence-sitting Naderites to vote for a real contender, but young people may have been more motivated by Russell Simmons' Hip-Hop Summit Action Network or the Eminem video.

In the end, I think Paul Begala has it right—that the Democrats have deeper problems than one filmmaker. That's why I concluded the article with his quote, and said—in my own words—that denouncing Moore would hardly fix those problems.

Uncivilized

THE UNITED STATES HAS always prided itself on being a civilized nation, but your February issue proves the citizens have brainwashed themselves.

"Ethics Delayed" by Sam Rosenfeld gave an account of

the Republican-led House of Representatives flipping the finger to ethics. To them, ethics may have its place, but evidently that place is not in government—unless it involves a Democrat, of course.

“Man-Made Disasters” by Joshua Kurlantzick told the tale of Asian governments becoming more authoritarian, often with the tacit approval of the White House. Seems that human-rights abuses also are on the rise in those nations allied with the United States in the war on terrorism. This speaks ill of the signals they’re receiving from our government.

“Hired Education” by Jennifer Washburn relates how well-respected doctors and university researchers are being duped, conned, and actually bought off by the pharmaceutical industry to approve drugs that have not been proven safe and effective, to the detriment of U.S. citizens.

The pièce de résistance, however, was “Unusual Suspects” by Tara McKelvey. That such abuses would be committed by U.S. forces against the Iraqi women they had imprisoned at Abu Ghraib is the height of bestiality. These women were not terrorists, insurgents, or even Saddam Hussein’s cronies, although some may have been related to men who were such. The least understanding of Iraqi culture would tell you that these women were unlikely to have been told anything about the males’ work or interests.

It doesn’t matter whether those who committed these atrocities were armed forces, the CIA, or outside contractors. It happened with U.S.

government employees, on the government’s watch, in an atmosphere created by the government, and under the government’s supposed supervision. Once you take the first step down the torture path, civilization is out the window.

In effect, our government has now told every country in the world that if they capture any of our servicewomen, or even any American women, tit for tat is only to be expected, and we accept that such abuse is more than likely to be visited upon them. Every woman in the United States should be up in arms about such treatment of Iraqi women and the consequences for American women. The fact that these abuses appear to have been given government cover-up and sanction is beyond the pale.

Civilized? Not hardly!

PATRICIA M. KOSTER
Williston, FL

Bloody Great

READ NORMA COHEN’S
Article “A Bloody Mess”
[February]. It was very illuminating.

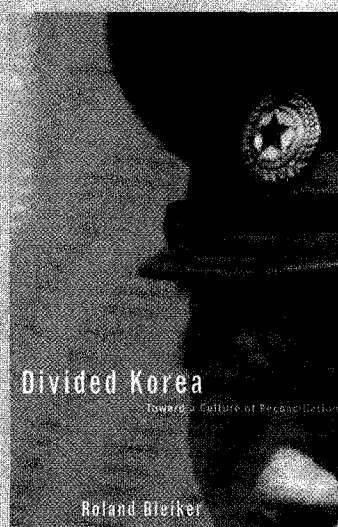
I find it quite surprising that the British mess has not received more coverage in connection with our own debate on Social Security. Is the press, or advocates of Social Security, asleep at the switch as usual?

Again, great article, as are many others that you publish.

LOU GITTLEMAN
Via E-Mail

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GLOBAL POWER

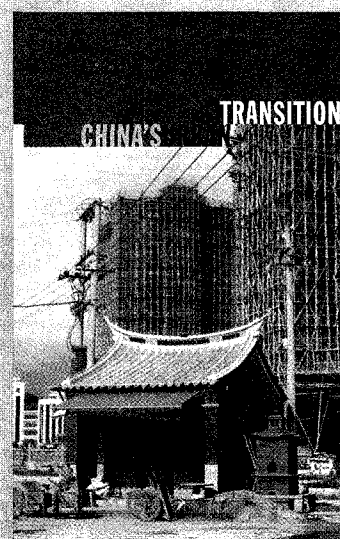


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Devil in the Details



LAW AND BORDER

LET'S SAY YOU'RE Michael Chertoff, and you want to build a fence. What would you need?

According to the House of Representatives, anything you want.

As the Real ID Act, passed by a 261-to-161 margin on February 10, says, "[T]he Secretary of Homeland Security shall have the authority to waive, and shall waive, all laws such Secretary, in such Secretary's sole discretion, determines necessary to ensure expeditious construction" of barriers and roads anywhere in the vicinity of the border.

Whence the need for such expansive power? Since 1996, Republican Representative Duncan Hunter has been pushing to close a three-mile

gap in the "Triple Border Fence," which stretches 14 miles along the California-Mexico border, from the Pacific to Otay Mesa. Even though the 1996 congressional authorization allowed the attorney general to waive the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act to finish the project, construction has been slowed by environmental concerns. So Hunter, with the generous support of Real ID sponsor James Sensenbrenner, added the new waiver to the national ID bill. And, in case the authority to waive "all laws" was needed at a later date, it was written so as to apply not just to three miles in San Diego but to anywhere "in the vicinity of

the United States border."

And just what does the phrase "all laws" comprise? "Whatever you think, it's worse," Representative Bob Filner sighed to the *Prospect* the day after the bill passed. Filner's district encompasses southern San Diego and the adjacent border area. "Due process laws, maybe? Maybe murder? Could you kill an undocumented [immigrant] and not face any crime?"

While the bill probably does not license Chertoff to kill at will, it does give him substantial leeway to waive environmental, labor, and procurement laws, among others. Or, as Representative Earl Blumenauer noted during the House debate, "[T]he secretary of homeland security could give a contract to his political cronies that had no safety standards, using 12-year-old illegal immigrants to do the labor, run it through the site of a Native American burial ground, kill bald eagles in the process, and pollute the drinking water of neighboring communities."

That's a lot of leeway, considering that the case for the bill is thin at best. The area is "not on a very high priority," according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection public-affairs officer Sal Zamora. Once "a no-man's-land," Zamora says, it's now "well-lit, it's laden with security It used to take 15 to 20 agents to have an impact in that area; today we benefit from

having possibly one or two agents." And while Hunter claims that "over 138,500 individuals" were apprehended in the San Diego sector in 2004—including Iranians, Syrians, and North Koreans—Filner estimates the number coming through the gap itself at "about dozens per month, not thousands or hundreds even." Hunter's office did not return calls to comment on the legislation.

Whether or not it's needed to cut off the flow of border-crossers, the new provision does allow the department to waive all labor and bidding laws—a task to which the department had rededicated itself just two weeks before with a redesigned personnel structure. Chertoff may not hold power over life and death, but if the House gets its way, power over overtime and pay will be his alone.

— JEFFREY DUBNER

A LADIES' FIRST?

OF THE MANY GENDER gaps in the political arena, one of the most persistent has been the donor gap. As recently as 2000, women donors were responsible for just one-quarter of hard-money contributions greater than \$200 to political candidates, and just one-seventh to one-eighth of soft-money contributions to political parties. Because most donations were

large donations in the pre-Internet political world, that meant that politics was mainly funded by men who, according to a 1999 report by the National Center for Policy Analysis, have tended to see giving to political candidates as a kind of business investment. Women, meanwhile, had tended to give to issue-oriented causes.

Now, however, those numbers may be starting to change—thanks to the Internet. “A lot of people think that the Internet is all male, and that people who sign up for things and participate in things are all men, but actually these progressive activist lists tend to skew female,” says Zack Exley, former director of Internet organizing and communications at Kerry-Edwards ’04. “By a little bit, the Kerry [e-mail] list skews more female.” That list was responsible for more than \$122 million in donations to John Kerry’s campaign and the Democratic National Committee in increments averaging less than \$100 per gift.

Nor was the Kerry list exceptional in securing female supporters on the left. MoveOn’s 3 million-strong list of supporters is also predominantly female, as is its activist base. “At MoveOn, the rates of volunteers who participated—it was a lot more women than men,” says Exley, who also worked for the anti-war progressive activist group. The same basic demo-

graphic pattern held true for the grass-roots shock troops of the Kerry campaign. “The vast majority of people who came out to do stuff for Kerry were women,” he says.

Look for these trends to continue with Howard Dean at the helm of the Democratic Party. Dean raised 61 percent of his record \$52 million primary-campaign dollars in increments of less than \$200, drawing mainly from the anti-war left and people who had not previously given to politicians. If the Kerry and MoveOn lists are any guide, that means women donors. Is it possible that the Democratic Party’s renewed financial health now depends on its being able to tap into the purses of its female supporters? Stay tuned to find out.

— GARANCE FRANKE-RUTA

ON BEYOND DATA

“IT’S A BUDGET THAT focuses on results,” President Bush told reporters on the day he sent his \$2.57 trillion budget to Congress. “Taxpayers in America don’t want us spending their money on something that’s not achieving results.”

Of course, results are important. Thus it’s curious that one of the 48 education programs that Bush budgeted out of existence was a novel \$306.5 million college-preparatory program for low-income

Chlorine plants release an estimated 100 tons of mercury a year in the United States ... The Centers for Disease Control has found that 8 percent of **women of childbearing age** have levels of mercury in their blood that could endanger their offspring ... In 2003, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) **eliminated** a 28-year requirement that set a cap on mercury emissions from chlorine plants ... Swimmers experience 3,500 to 5,500 cases of “highly credible gastrointestinal illness” each year because of **improper sewage treatment** ... According to a 2003 University of Michigan study, swimmers in waterways containing blended sewage are 100 times more likely to develop **cysts** or **diarrhea** ... As of press time, the EPA is poised to allow the routine release of inadequately treated sewage into waterways as long as it is diluted with treated sewage, a process called “**blending**” ... 1,100 **coal-fired** power plants account for almost 25 percent of the nation’s nitrogen-oxide pollution and 70 percent of its sulfur-dioxide pollution ... 30 utility companies own the **dirtiest** U.S. power plants ... Over the last five years, those companies have given a combined **\$6.6 million** to President Bush and the Republican Party ... From 2000 to 2002, the number of warnings in which air in U.S. cities was declared **unhealthy** increased by 32 percent ... There has been a 52-percent decrease in EPA **clean-air inspections** at refineries since 2001 ... In the first three years of the Bush administration, EPA data document a 75-percent decline, as compared with the last three years of the Clinton administration, in the number of **federal lawsuits** filed against companies violating national environmental laws ... **Civil citations** for polluters are down 57 percent since 2001 ... **Criminal prosecutions** have fallen 17 percent in that time ... **President Bill Clinton** designated 9.5 million acres as **wilderness** ... Since taking office, President George W. Bush has designated 530,000 acres of wilderness ... The average number of species per year that federal officials added to the **endangered species** list under George Bush Senior was 59; under Clinton, 65; under Bush Junior, **9.5** ... 36 percent of federally protected wildlife species have a designated “**critical habitat**” ... Between 2001 and 2003, 42 million acres of critical habitat were **cut** from the 83 million acres proposed for threatened and endangered species ... The number of foreign species affected by a 2003 Bush administration proposal to **loosen** Endangered Species Act restrictions on importing endangered species from other countries is 560 ... The **Safari Club International**, a leading proponent of the change, contributed \$158,900 to Republican candidates in 2004.

students that's shown great promise. The Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs, aptly nicknamed GEAR-UP, gives six-year grants to states and local partnerships to provide college-preparatory services at the nation's poorest middle and high schools. Starting at seventh grade, GEAR-UP follows entire classrooms of low-income students as they navigate their way through high school and ready themselves for college. Further, GEAR-UP funds help provide college scholarships to low-income students.

According to the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (GEAR-UP's Washington liaison), the 1.4 million middle- and high-school students that the program serves have greatly benefited from it. But you needn't take the council's word for it: In assessing the program's performance, the White House's own Office of Management and Budget concluded that

GEAR-UP addresses the obstacles to college enrollment using strategies that two separate studies have demonstrated to be effective.

So why eliminate the program? According to the president's budget summary, "No data are available to measure progress towards long-term program goals." An indisputable assertion—for in the absence of time travel, it would be impossible to measure the long-term success of a college-preparatory program that started with a cohort of seventh-graders in 1999. As those students are only now reaching college age, no long-term data exist precisely because no long-term data can exist.

Of course, empiricism is a fluid concept in Bush's budget. Despite studies that have shown the ineffectiveness of abstinence-only sex education, for instance, programs that promote abstinence as the only method of contraception received \$205.5 million in the

budget—a 25-percent increase over last year.

While Bush's results-based rhetoric dooms certain programs and passes over others, one outcome of this budget remains certain: Fewer students will be having sex—in college.

— MARK LEON GOLDBERG

HITCHY 'N' HOROWITZ

BACK IN AUGUST 1999, when he was promoting his soon-to-be-released book, *Hating Whitey and Other Progressive Causes*, left-wing radical turned right-wing radical David Horowitz observed that "it is precisely because Bush is perceived as a candidate who can break the vicious stereotyping of Republicans as anti-black that he has to be smeared. Bush was thus labeled 'Governor Death' in a Christopher Hitchens column." By the time Horowitz was done, the plot by Hitchens, the NAACP, and Amnesty International came in for 20 more paragraphs of castigation.

Then again, the unkind remarks may just have been payback for Hitchens' 1990 comment to *The Washington Times* that, "I consider Horowitz and [frequent Horowitz co-author Peter] Collier sellouts. I wouldn't want anything to do with them socially. It's not a political question. I just think they're sleazy." Times, however, have changed, and Hitchens has decided to cap his intellectual journey from contrarian to left-wing hawk to right-wing *obscurantista* by joining with Horowitz's Center for the Study of Popular

Culture to stage a weeklong "Tour London With Christopher Hitchens and David Horowitz" fandango this June.

According to *FrontPage Magazine*, an online Horowitz screed, the price for the trip "includes airfare from Los Angeles, seven nights at the Athenaeum Hotel, all breakfasts, 2 lunches, one at Pen-shurst and another near Stratford, as well as 3 dinners including a welcome dinner at Parliament, and a farewell dinner at the Calvary Guards Club, and all programs." Evidently, there's nothing sleazy about it.

The Hitchens-Horowitz rapprochement appears to go back some time and may have its origins in their joint passion for Clinton-bashing. It only blossomed into romance, though, when Hitchens concluded, as he explained in a recent *FrontPage* interview, that the left has formed "an alliance with women-stoning, gay-burning, Jew-hating medieval theocrats."

Stranger still than this outburst of pedestrian punditry was Hitchens' January 25 appearance at the right-wing American Enterprise Institute. Beltway right-wingers were invited to "bring your kids, young and old, and join us" for an evening of poetry readings by, among others, *Weekly Standard* Editor Bill Kristol, *Policy Review* Editor Mary Eberstadt (author of a recent book about the dire threat working mothers pose to America), and Hitchens, not hitherto considered the most family-appropriate writer in town.

Sleazy? Incongruous? The union of festering minds? You decide.

— MATTHEW YGLESIAS

TRANSCRIPT

President Bush, speaking on February 4, 2005, in Tampa, Florida:

Because the—all which is on the table begins to address the big cost drivers. For example, how benefits are calculate, for example, is on the table; whether or not benefits rise based upon wage increases or price increases. There's a series of parts of the formula that are being considered. And when you couple that, those different cost drivers, affecting those—changing those with personal accounts—the idea is to get what has been promised more likely to be, or closer delivered to, what has been promised.

Does that make any sense to you? It's kind of muddled. Look, there's a series of things that cause the—like, for example, benefits are calculated based upon the increase of wages, as opposed to the increase of prices. Some have suggested that we calculate—the benefits will rise based upon inflation, as opposed to wage increases. There is a reform that would help solve the red if that were put into effect. In other words, how fast benefits grow, how fast the promised benefits grow, if those—if that growth is affected, it will help on the red.

— Compiled by Mark Leon Goldberg



TO CONVICT ONE DOCTOR, ZEALOTS AT DEA TORE UP PAIN GUIDELINES DEVELOPED OVER FOUR YEARS.

Last August, after an historic collaboration between the Drug Enforcement Administration and the University of Wisconsin's Pain & Policy Studies Group, the DEA published new and widely applauded Pain Management Guidelines intended to protect physicians from prosecution by overzealous federal agents. In October the DEA suddenly withdrew the Guidelines, effectively trashing years of effort. Why?

According to the Washington Post, "The DEA's abrupt turnaround appeared to have been triggered when defense lawyers tried to introduce the new Guidelines in the trial of Dr. (William) Hurwitz" -- a Virginia pain specialist accused of over-prescribing. Shortly after the Guidelines were withdrawn, the US prosecutor successfully petitioned the court to exclude them as evidence.

In the Pain Guidelines, the doctors and the DEA had agreed that the government should stop investigating doctors like

Hurwitz simply for being active in pain management -- and stop prosecuting those few who followed the recommendations but unwittingly prescribed opiates to deceitful patients. The DEA arbitrarily reversed that agreement.

Dr. David Joranson, head of the University of Wisconsin Group, says the "DEA's abrupt withdrawal of support for the [Guidelines] without consulting with coauthors about their concerns, raises questions about what advisory role, if any, the pain management community can expect to have with DEA." The agency's changes, he says, "are likely to interfere in medical practice and pain management."

His colleague, Dr. Russell Portenoy of Beth Israel Medical Center, told the Washington Post that the DEA has changed "the tone of the dialogue in a way that is very worrisome. We're seeing more of an emphasis on law enforcement and less on the legitimate use of prescription narcotics."

Over 30 million Americans suffer from chronic pain. Are we going to let them live in agony because of the misguided zealotry of federal prosecutors?

Common Sense for Drug Policy
www.CommonSenseDrugPolicy.org www.DrugWarFacts.org
Mike Gray, Chair; Robert Field, Co-Chair

Dispatches

"The list of 2.75 million Kerry donors is the single most valuable one in Democratic history."

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SQUEEZE TIME

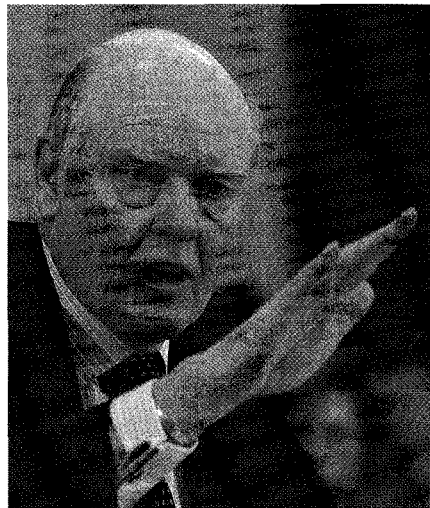
The biggest budget battle since the famous Clinton-Gingrich face-off isn't just about cuts. It's about the GOP's real goal: permanent cuts.

BY SAM ROSENFELD

ALL BUDGETS HAVE GOT TO BE based on priorities," George W. Bush said on February 8, "and mine are clear." He wasn't lying. The president's \$2.57 trillion budget proposal for fiscal year 2006 calls for a 16-percent cut in all non-homeland domestic discretionary spending—which includes most education, housing, environmental-protection, and research programs—in five years and devastating cuts to low-income entitlement programs like Medicaid, in part to help finance \$1.6 trillion in tax cuts in the coming decade. In the name of a five-year deficit-reduction plan universally dismissed as hallucinatory, the proposal targets low-income programs that have contributed to, at most, about 6 percent of the increase in deficits in the last four years, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP).

Outrageous, to be sure, but what else is new? The president has included many of the same cuts and provisions in past budget submissions, and has rarely pushed hard to overcome congressional resistance to them. Indeed, Republican governance during his first term was characterized by a candy-for-all fiscal policy—combining massive tax cuts with steady spending increases—that may have lulled many into thinking that starve-the-beast conservatism is a thing of the past. When it comes to the overall growth in government spending, it likely is a thing of the past: The White House's

FY 2006 budget proposal is one-third bigger than the last budget of Bill Clinton's presidency. But this year, for the first time, the threat that deficit politics poses to programs serving the most vulnerable Americans looks to be more real than theoretical. And this year's debate won't only concern cuts; it will concern structural



Snow Job: Treasury Secretary John Snow

changes the Republicans seek that would make deep cuts a permanent and continuous part of the budget process. It just might provoke the most intense budget battle since the Gingrich-Clinton showdown of 1995.

Ask Democrats and low-income advocates about the coming budget fight this year and they reach for outsized clichés: "the mother of all battles," "the fight of a lifetime," "the perfect storm." No one

doubts that most of the spending cuts Bush is calling for—farm subsidies, defense projects, Amtrak funding—amount to the usual hot air that permeates all budget proposals and stand no chance of actually passing. But a confluence of circumstances has led observers to take the threat of cuts to programs benefiting low-income Americans more seriously than they have in the past few years.

What has changed? Broadly speaking, the rapidly expanding deficit, combined with the president's simultaneous pledges to halve that deficit in four years and to make his tax cuts permanent, have sharpened the focus on curtailing spending growth. More precisely, a political dynamic that began in 2002, when Republicans took control of the Senate, is bringing the spending issue to a head. This was already in evidence in the huge FY 2005 omnibus appropriations bill passed late last year, which surprised many with its austerity in funding social programs. (It was the first appropriations bill during Bush's presidency that actually cut non-homeland domestic discretionary spending—by 1.7 percent in real terms.) According to Scott Lilly, former House Appropriations Committee staff director and now a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, for years Republicans had enjoyed the luxury of scapegoating Democrats whenever they outspent their own budget resolutions.

"As long as the Democrats controlled the White House or the Senate, Republicans could always come up with an excuse that someone else made them do it," he explains. "But once the Republicans controlled the House, the Senate, and the White House—and this past budget cycle was the first one in which that's happened—they didn't have an excuse and they couldn't play that game anymore."

Hence, the squeeze.

But Republican politicians, being

politicians, seek to deflect responsibility for unpopular spending *cuts* just as fervently as they hope to obscure their indulgences in spending profligacy. That's why the most important vehicle for rolling back spending this year, most observers say, is an array of budget-process changes that the White House and congressional conservatives are advocating. Process rules are the perfect way to curb spending without associating specific lawmakers with specific cuts. For Republicans, they also provide a fail-safe way to ensure that the "right" programs—services to politically vulnerable and traditionally Democratic constituents—feel the brunt

Committee's new chair, Judd Gregg, an entitlement hawk who bucked his party's leadership in opposing the 2003 Medicare law, as a sign of the fight to come. "It really is the absolutely perfect set of serendipitous circumstances for them," says one budget analyst closely following the process in Congress. "Who do you have on the budget committee? Judd Gregg. What is Judd Gregg's mission in life? To control entitlement spending."

That Medicaid is in the crosshairs has been obvious since Bush tapped Michael Leavitt to become the new secretary of health and human services. As governor of Utah two years ago, Leavitt restructured

include services like prescription drugs and clinic care).

Republicans are hoping that the carrot of greater flexibility will induce governors to accept reductions in federal support. As Ron Pollack, president of the health-care coalition Families U.S.A., puts it, "Flexibility is a euphemism for allowing [governors] to reduce benefits considerably, to increase cost-sharing requirements with people, and to eliminate the guarantee that anyone eligible for coverage receives it." Meanwhile, Democratic opposition to a Medicaid overhaul is no longer relevant, given the stated intention of both Gregg and his counterpart in the House, Jim Nussle, to push through such changes in a reconciliation bill that cannot be filibustered. Here the results of November 2, where Republicans gained four seats in the Senate, may prove decisive. As Pollack puts it bluntly, "This is the biggest threat to public-health programs in the history of the country."

Medicaid is hardly the only endangered entitlement. Budget-process changes that would devastate an array of mandatory spending programs are more likely to pass this year than ever before. These include both long-range caps on entitlement spending and "one-sided PAYGO" rules that would straitjacket spending programs while doing little to alleviate deficits. The pay-as-you-go budget provisions of the 1990s required lawmakers to pay for any increases in entitlement spending or decreases in revenues (i.e., tax cuts); such changes had to be offset either by equivalent budget cuts or by revenue increases elsewhere. Since those rules expired in 2002, congressional Republicans and the White House have strived to enact a variation on PAYGO that completely exempts taxes from the equation: No tax cuts would require offsetting, and spending increases could only be offset by entitlement cuts elsewhere—never by tax increases.

Structural spending caps and one-sided PAYGO proposals very likely constitute the most important front in the budget fight this year. If the Republicans succeed in instituting such reforms,

Most observers see the ascension of the Senate Budget Committee's new chair, entitlement hawk Judd Gregg, who opposed the 2003 Medicare law, as a sign of the major fight to come over Medicaid.

of the pain. In 1981, David Stockman, Ronald Reagan's first budget director, made a famous distinction between "weak clients" (vulnerable constituents deserving protection from budget cuts) and "weak claims" (programs of dubious legitimacy serving constituencies with real political clout). Current GOP strategy reverses that calculus: Through a series of structural changes and buck-passing mechanisms, Republicans intend to pit program against program in a battle for diminished resources—and may the stronger clients win.

The White House budget, for example, calls for a five-year cap on non-homeland domestic discretionary spending without specifying funding for individual programs during fiscal years 2007–10. CBPP President Robert Greenstein, who says this is the first time since 1989 that a budget has omitted such information, stresses the danger that "the discretionary programs with weaker constituencies [will] get cut deeper and deeper and deeper."

Even more significant this year than the squeeze on discretionary programs is the threat against entitlement spending, from Medicaid to food stamps to Supplemental Security Income. Most observers see the ascension of the Senate Budget

the state's Medicaid plan to cut benefits and raise co-payments for more than 17,000 people. Then, in 2003, he lent vocal support to the president's proposal to transform Medicaid into a federal block grant to states—which would have effectively ended the Medicaid entitlement at the same time that health-care costs continue to skyrocket. [See Barbara T. Dreyfuss, "A Dirty Job," *The American Prospect Online*, February 2, 2005.]

The block-grant proposal stalled in the face of opposition by most governors and the pledge of a filibuster signed by 48 Democratic senators. The White House, along with Leavitt, has taken pains to stress that it is not reviving a block-grant proposal now—a claim that few observers believe. On top of the \$45 billion cut in federal Medicaid funding that the president's budget proposes upfront, most are interpreting both language in the budget proposal and comments made by Leavitt during his Senate confirmation hearings to mean that Republicans will push for further federal cuts and greater flexibility for states this year. The largest changes would most likely apply to "optional" Medicaid beneficiaries (about one-third of all enrollees) and benefits (which

the ensuing spending cuts and entitlement shortfalls would compound over years, eventually forcing rollbacks in government services that no politician of either party would ever have signed off on in the first place. That, of course, is precisely the point. As the budget analyst puts it, such caps are “the ultimate ‘look, Ma, no hands,’ no-accountability moves”—technical accounting tweaks that ensure “permanent, structural, irreversible changes” in government commitments to social spending.

Such changes came close to passing in the last two years; moderate Republican Senators Olympia Snowe, Susan Collins, and John McCain managed to prevent the passage of a budget resolution last year specifically over opposition to one-sided PAYGO. Whether they stand firm this year is an open question. There is a serious risk

that such self-professed deficit hawks will cite the urgency of the fiscal situation to justify signing off on various entitlement-cap provisions this year.

Still, none of this is a done deal. Advocates and organizations representing low-income constituencies—shaken out of complacency by the bite of last year’s appropriations bill—are gearing up for a fight. If anything, the biggest danger for such advocates is that the Republicans’ likely retreat from most of the *explicit* program cuts they’re seeking will only obscure the real stakes of the fight over budget-process rules. After all, says the budget analyst, “It’d be one thing if this was just about cutting. But it’s not. It’s really about putting in place long-term mechanisms that will force the decline, year after year after year, of critical spending and critical investment programs.” **TAP**

perch in the offices of Senator Edward Kennedy, suggested that I speak to campaign spokesman David Wade, now back in Kerry’s Senate office. He had a copy of the list, as did Cutter, but neither of them had yet used it to expand their bosses’ media reach. And no one had turned over a copy to the Democratic National Committee (DNC), nor had anyone at the committee requested one. The lists likewise were not sent to Reid’s Senate press office, the new Capitol Hill node for pushing the out-of-power Democrats’ message.

This is not an aberration. There is another, even more important list that the Kerry team is holding on to—a list containing the e-mail addresses of approximately 2.75 million Kerry donors, volunteers, and supporters. This list is the single most valuable one in Democratic Party history. “It was worth \$122 million to the Kerry campaign and the Democratic Party,” says Zack Exley, the former director of Internet organizing and communications for Kerry-Edwards ’04. But thanks to the wording of Kerry’s online privacy policy during the primary, which promised to bar the forwarding of supporters’ e-mail addresses to anyone outside the campaign, this list is now the proprietary possession of the junior Massachusetts senator. “It’s John Kerry’s property. It was his campaign,” says Tom Matzzie, former director of Internet organizing for the Kerry campaign and now Washington director of the online activist group MoveOn. To get it, “the DNC would have to buy it from him.” Indeed, Federal Election Commission (FEC) laws seem to require it.

Kerry list-makers and DNC technology operatives say that they have done all they legally can to transfer Kerry supporter names to the DNC. After the Democratic national convention, for example, Kerry sent letters to his list via the DNC servers asking that donations be made to the DNC. Millions poured into the national party’s coffers, and with each donation came a name and e-mail address previously in Kerry’s possession.

But if you think the laws on privacy and assets of value are fixed obstacles, think again. The Bush-Cheney ’04 cam-

A LISTLESS PARTY

The RNC inherited the Bush campaign’s list of donors and volunteers, but on the Democratic side, the Kerry list belongs to ... John Kerry.

BY GARANCE FRANKE-RUTA

LIKE OTHER JOURNALISTS, I FIRST heard of the Democratic Senate opposition agenda, proposed by Minority Leader Harry Reid in late January, by e-mail—specifically, an e-mail that came from Republican National Committee (RNC) Chairman Ken Mehlman. The correspondence sarcastically noted that “[t]he ten-point plan Sen. Reid presented today may be called the American ‘promise,’ but Reid only seems to be promising to continue blocking the American people’s priorities.”

Should Democrats worry that a Republican got the first word on the Democratic leader’s agenda? They could excuse it as a fluke: Reid’s fledgling Senate Democratic Communications Center, the so-called Senate war room, was still gearing up in January, and the group had lost its communications director after just two weeks in operation, leaving it undermanned and with a half-finished press list. But pull the thread a little bit and

you find some important differences between Republican and Democratic post-election organizing efforts. I hadn’t signed up to receive press e-mails from the RNC communications office, but they started arriving in my in-box thanks to a transfer of names and contact information from the disbanded Bush-Cheney ’04 campaign to the RNC. “We’ve done an internal audit so that folks we feel should be getting information are,” explained RNC deputy communications director Danny Diaz.

It was a small and simple thing, but no similar handover of information took place on the Democratic side. When I asked former Kerry communications director Stephanie Cutter if there had been any demand from Democrats for John Kerry’s comprehensive, up-to-date, nationwide press lists, she just laughed. “No,” she said. “Most Democratic organizations have very thorough press lists as it is.” Cutter, who has returned to her

paigned wrote its privacy policy so that it could share its supporters', donors', and volunteers' e-mail addresses with the national and state parties. (So did the campaign of incoming DNC Chairman Howard Dean.) And, during the presidential campaign, the Bush team conducted multiple e-mail address exchanges with the RNC, which is an allowed exchange of assets of equal value under FEC rules. The net result: The Bush campaign has decommissioned, but the RNC is continuing to contact the roughly 1.4 million volunteers and community leaders it organized online.

Meanwhile, the Senate Democrats have no online base they can organize on their behalf to fight Bush's priorities, and Kerry is using his e-mail list to push

a list of less than half that many usable e-mail addresses; millions more were purchased from consumer databases such as those maintained by the credit-rating company Equifax. And purchased lists, once believed to be the quickest route to growing an online audience, are now known to be virtually useless. An "open rate" on an organically grown list should be at least 25 percent, says Exley, meaning that about a quarter to half of e-mail recipients at least skim it. Over time, on healthy lists, three-quarters or more will open messages, as different subsets of the list read different missives. But on bought lists, open rates are usually less than 10 percent—sometimes much less. Bought lists also tend to be full of dead addresses. Plus, people with live addresses who re-

vention. The Bush team, by contrast, collected signatures at state party conventions, state fairs, and state Lincoln Day dinners, plus the exclusive Bush-Cheney political rallies closed to Kerry supporters. "We tried to make e-mail recruitment a part of everything we did," says Turk. That means Kerry's list is full of random people who looked him up on the Web, and whom Kerry mainly contacted with fund-raising solicitations, while Bush's list is more focused on politically active community leaders who can be fruitfully organized in the future.

This difference in outreach perspective has persisted after the campaign, and is reflected on the parties' Web sites. The DNC provides only one contact number on its site, while the RNC provides an easily navigable "Contact Us" page with different numbers for a variety of functions, making the page more useful for directing insiders and recruiting outsiders alike. The RNC site, designed by Mike Connell's award-winning Ohio-based Internet firm New Media Communications, has scrolling text, pictures, and all kinds of bells and whistles to keep the viewer there, clicking through material. New Media also designs for a who's who of conservative causes, such as the National Rifle Association and Citizens for Tax Repeal, making it an expert in creating friendly sites for right-wingers. By contrast, the DNC site, designed by Kelly's subordinates in-house at the DNC, is a bare-bones operation with few pictures, written in dated fonts and providing outdated material in critical areas. Pity, for example, the poor cub reporter in New Mexico who thinks the DNC's communications director is still Debra DeShong, as the DNC Web site stated as late as February 2005. DeShong left the DNC in June 2004.

It's in just such patterns that the seeds of defeat or victory in 2008 are already being sown. Republicans, who operated as a unified front in 2004, have by and large shifted the important data gathered by the Bush-Cheney campaign over to the RNC. The Democrats have pursued a more scattershot course designed to promote individual advantage for former staffers and candidates, rather than to

The differences in the way the two campaigns collected names means that Kerry's list is full of random people who looked him up on the Web, while Bush's list is more focused on activists.

items on his personal legislative agenda, such as his "Put Kids First" campaign to expand Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program to cover 11 million uninsured children, which have little chance of being written into law this year. "A lot of these organizations remind me of Gollum in *The Lord of the Rings*: 'My precious, my preciousss!' with the emphasis on 'my,'" notes Joe Trippi, former Dean campaign manager, of the campaigns. "Everyone hoards lists."

The raw numbers of donors and supporters on these lists don't tell the whole story. The quality of the names also matters. The DNC maintains its own database of 3.8 million e-mail contacts, says DNC technology director Doug Kelly. Kelly says this database was grown organically since the DNC launched its current Web site and online campaigns in 2002, gaining close to a million new names during the presidential general election alone. "We didn't buy" the names, he says.

Not so, say others familiar with the DNC list growth. They say the DNC has, at most,

ceive unsolicited and unwanted e-mails on bought lists can report political e-mails as spam in large enough numbers that entire service providers, such as yahoo.com or hotmail.com, may block all future DNC or RNC communications. That makes organically grown lists, such as Kerry's, that much more valuable. The majority of the addresses in the RNC database—which Michael Turk, director of e-Campaigns for the RNC and former e-campaign director for Bush-Cheney '04, says is now close to 8 million strong—come from similarly bought lists, according to Exley. That's why the RNC is so eager to focus on the subset of 1.4 million volunteer and supporter names collected by the Bush campaign.

For similar technical reasons, even Kerry's list may not be as valuable as Bush's. The Kerry campaign built its list through an "opt-in" process. About a third of its members came after Kerry told a TV audience to go to johnkerry.com, another million or so were recruited through online petitions, and 200,000 signed up the night Kerry spoke at the Democratic con-

build for the party as a whole. Even when Kerry's Internet team offered to write a "best practices and lessons learned" report about the campaign, Kerry campaign higher-ups failed to requisition it. "I found it was interesting that they had hindered themselves in that way," says Turk of the Kerry privacy policy.

Still, some say the Democrats will learn from their defeat. "In 2008, I

think you'll see it differently," says Trippi. Of course, Democrats don't have to wait that long to become more coordinated and united. There are simple ways for Kerry to get around his own privacy policy. Already, post-election, he has sent a message to members of his list suggesting that they might want to keep fighting as part of a team—by donating to the DNC. **TAP**

A TEMPORARY FIX

A rapidly growing contingent workforce could benefit from labor and management partnerships, but the NLRB stands in the way.

BY JIM GROSSFELD AND JOHN D. PODESTA

WITH THE WHITE HOUSE AND congressional conservatives ramping up to make the coming four years as memorable as the last, it is easy to miss some of their less conspicuous exploits. Many of those have taken place at the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), which has issued multiple decisions that are costing millions of Americans their best chance to join the middle class.

One such decision came in November of last year, when the conservative-dominated board overturned the *MB Sturgis* decision. *Sturgis*, as it came to be called, was the 2000 NLRB ruling that acknowledged that workers who perform the same job for a company under the same supervision as regular employees can share a "community of interests" even though they may be employed through a temporary-services agency. By removing a legal obstacle preventing unions from organizing and negotiating for these workers, *Sturgis* gave the labor movement a new opportunity to grow and gain strength in industries that rely heavily on temps. In overturning *Sturgis*, the NLRB reinstated an obsolete policy allowing temp workers to join forces with permanent employees and unionize only if both the temp agency and the employer agree to it. As union organizers point out, the chances of that ever happening are somewhere between slim and none.

Commenting in *The Washington Post*, Harley Shaiken, a professor of labor issues at the University of California, Berkeley, observed, "It's going to be an almost impossible set of permissions to be met. I think it is meant to and will discourage organization among temporary workers."

THIS MATTERS BECAUSE, FOR AN ever-growing number of Americans, working as temps and at a succession of other contingent jobs is the closest they will ever come to having a career. As America entered the new millennium, 26.6 percent of the U.S. workforce was employed in these nonstandard arrangements. Given the growth of the contingent workforce, it is little surprise that the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that, between 2002 and 2012, the \$62 billion a year "employment services" industry (temporary-staffing services) will grow by a stunning 54 percent.

Some industries see the use of contingent workers as essential to their success. For example, in the tech industry, many innovative firms say their success hinges on their ability to move rapidly to seize new opportunities. Rather than be encumbered by a large, permanent workforce, these enterprises prefer to partner with other firms as needed and employ much of their workforce on a project-by-project basis. Some add that subcontracting to skilled freelancers can even be

fundamental to the creative process.

For their part, many young techies enjoy the diverse work experiences and sense of independence that nonstandard work arrangements can offer. However, they are more the exception than the rule.

Estimates are that more than half of all contingent workers would prefer to have regular, full-time jobs. And for good reason: Contingent workers earn significantly less than their full-time counterparts. By one measure, part-time workers were paid almost \$4 per hour less than full-timers. The same goes for benefits. For example, it is estimated that less than 17 percent of part-timers receive health insurance through their jobs.

As the leader of the San Jose-area AFL-CIO, Amy Dean spent a decade helping contingent workers in California's Silicon Valley. She points out that given their second-class status, contingents are rarely able to access the training opportunities that may be available to permanent workers. "The question is not whether the economy is trending away from offering traditional, full-time jobs," Dean says. "The real issue is what institution can fill the vacuum that's creating."

With nonstandard jobs now a permanent and growing feature of America's economy, there is a dire need for "labor-market intermediaries" that can help contingent workers gain better wages, benefits, training, and job-placement opportunities. And who in America is best suited to be that intermediary? The answer is organized labor.

The idea of unions representing contingent workers is hardly new. Unions in the construction, maritime, and entertainment industries have long demonstrated how such organizations can effectively represent workers who work on a project-by-project basis and routinely move from one employer to the next.

By organizing to win multiemployer contracts, these unions gained the density and economies of scale necessary to provide employer-financed health-care benefits, training opportunities, and improved wages. In the entertainment industry and the arts, the median weekly earnings of union members are approximately 29 percent greater than for their

nonunion counterparts. In the construction industry, the union advantage soars to almost 60 percent.

As labor activists take pains to point out, if their members earn more money it is because unions offer employers something of greater value: ready access to a stable, highly trained, and motivated workforce. It is a choice many employers have already shown they are willing to make.

In the telecommunications industry, where complex new technologies are constantly being introduced, large employers such as Verizon and SBC Communications have long partnered with the Communications Workers of America (CWA) to offer telecom workers advanced technical training. Now, through the union's CWA/NETT academy, other workers can take advantage of an array of programs offering training in the highly specialized skills telecom employers need. After only three years, CWA/NETT has already graduated more than 1,000 workers.

Some smaller firms have adopted a

similar approach. For example, Tucker Technology Inc., an Oakland, California, information-technology firm, offers its clients a range of hardware- and software-design and sophisticated installation services. Through its partnership with the CWA, Tucker is able to train the cabling technicians, design engineers, and other workers it needs. Thanks partly to its commitment to training, Tucker Technology has been named one of *Inc.* magazine's "Urban Superstars" for four consecutive years.

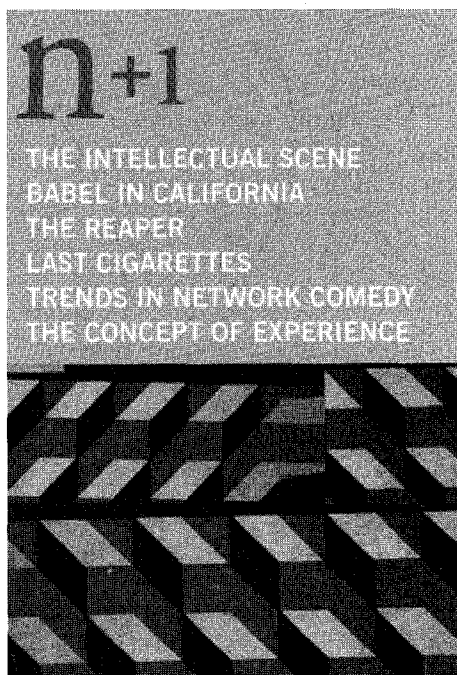
These kinds of successful partnerships are not uncommon throughout unionized industries. They offer a glimpse of what unions and employers, working together, could do for America's contingent workers. When will it occur? Not very soon. And that takes us back to the NLRB.

THOUGH CREATED DURING THE NEW Deal to promote collective bargaining, under President Bush the NLRB has moved aggressively to do the opposite. The board consists of five members, each

appointed to five-year terms by the president with Senate consent. Traditionally the party in power holds a 3-to-2 majority. The chairman of the NLRB today is Robert Battista, a Detroit management attorney. Unlike Reagan-era NLRB Chairman Donald Dotson, who once opined that unions were "major contributors to the decline and failure of once-healthy industries," Battista is a relatively low-key figure. However, the firm where he practiced law since 1965, Butzel Long, played a prominent role advising the joint management of the *Detroit Free Press* and *The Detroit News* in its uniquely brutal effort to bust the newspaper workers' unions in the 1990s.

When sworn in as NLRB chairman in 2002, Battista sent an unmistakable message about where he intended to steer the board. In a not so subtle reference to "card check," a process enabling workers to sidestep lengthy delays of elections and unionize simply by signing a card, Battista remarked, "America's industrial relations system is predicated

"Their magazine had better be pretty good—if not, our future is screwed." — PAUL BERMAN



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on the free choice of employees to decide for themselves in secret ballot elections whether or not they wish to organize and bargain collectively." It came as little surprise when Battista announced that the NLRB would consider barring card-check recognition (a decision could come as early as this spring).

Of course, if the NLRB does ban card check, it would only be the latest of a series of conservative "reforms" the board has championed. Last year, it not only rolled back the collective bargaining rights of temp-agency employees but stripped university graduate-research and teaching assistants of their right to organize. Astoundingly, it even weakened the rights of disabled workers.

Today, legislators on Capitol Hill are mobilizing to reform U.S. labor laws and restore the right of workers to organize. One proposal, the Employee Free Choice Act, would guarantee the right to card-check recognition. In a House of Representatives led by Tom DeLay, a legislator who has equated labor leaders with terrorists, chances for the act's speedy consideration are less than promising. However, its supporters understand that if strengthening worker rights is ever to make it onto America's agenda, they will need to wage a sustained grass-roots campaign on its behalf.

But, as underscored by the board's decision to overturn *Sturgis*, U.S. labor laws must also be made to reflect the realities of today's economy. For starters, that means protecting the rights of contingent workers to organize and preventing temp agencies from being used to pay workers less than they deserve.

Unions have a vital role to play in the new economy. That's why our nation can hardly afford the kind of NLRB it has today—an agency that is as indifferent to the tectonic changes in America's workplaces as it is to those who labor in them. There is much the board can do to help today's workers make it into the middle class, but building a bridge back to the 20th century is not one of them. **TAP**

Jim Grossfeld is the director of speech-writing and editorial services at the Center for American Progress. John D. Podesta is the center's president.



A Banner Day: The opening of the World Social Forum

THAT OTHER FORUM

The agenda at the World Social Forum was—well, 268 pages long. But the road from Davos to Porto Alegre appears to be a long one.

BY SAMUEL LOEWENBERG

PORTO ALEGRE, BRAZIL —

WHAT DO BILL GATES, TONY Blair, and Sharon Stone have in common? All spent the last week of January hanging out in Davos, the exclusive Swiss resort town that for the last three decades has been home to the World Economic Forum, where the world's elite business, financial, and political leaders meet to chart the course of the world.

For everybody else, there was the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, a small river city in southern Brazil. Here, more than 150,000 people from 135 countries spent six days attending some 2,500 lectures, workshops, and cultural events. This was the anti-globalization movement trying to globalize itself.

It was messy. Activists from poor countries and rich, feminist and native-rights groups, environmental organizations and unions—all trying to find common ground. When the World Social Forum began in 2001, stopping free

trade and the power of multinational corporations was at the top of the agenda. These days, the activists, trade unionists, intellectuals, indigenous groups, and multitudes of others gathered in Porto Alegre are struggling to determine not only what they are against but also what they are for.

That wasn't always easy, given the event's structure and attendance. During the six-day event, eager world-changers had wandered along several kilometers of riverbank searching for meetings spread throughout hundreds of tents, only to find that a conference on child trafficking had been replaced by one on African women's issues, or had been moved to a makeshift space outdoors. Attendees were Dutch syndicalists, African feminists, Brazilian miners, American environmentalists, French intellectuals, and Indian untouchables. Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva spoke on the first day of the conference, endorsing a global campaign to end poverty. Venezue-

lan President Hugo Chavez ended the conference with his typical populist flourish, after visiting the Brazilian poor trying to lay claim to unused land. The forum also attracted a handful of Nobel laureates and more than 100 indigenous tribes from throughout the world. Nobel Prize-winning Portuguese novelist José Saramago told a cheering crowd that the International Monetary Fund should be a democratically accountable institution.

By the meetings' end, what the forum's platform would be was far from clear. The agenda, released one day before the conference, came in two 134-page volumes, plus 12 pages of corrections. The subject of the panels covered everything from water privatization in Uruguay to India's underclass of 200 million Dalits to the

it is easier to travel, communicate, and meet face to face," van Klink said.

"We think in this age of globalization we can no longer work only in one country," said Dieter Eich, a representative of the Confederation of German Trade Unions. The German unions sent several delegations to Porto Alegre in an attempt to bridge the gap between workers in wealthy and poor countries, said Eich. "For the Brazilian unions dealing with a German company, they are limited in how much pressure they can apply. But if the German unions also apply the pressure, it can have a lot of impact." Eich's delegation was sent, among other things, to promote higher safety standards for Brazilian miners who work in a bauxite mine owned by

local people, he would have to go directly to the villages. "Meetings like this are great, but this is a speck in terms of what we need to do to reach the grass roots," Switkes said. "It's a problem for lots of international organizations."

The Brahmins in Davos say they are listening, though it was clear that that gathering was torn between its business goals and its attempts at compassion. A few weeks before the conference, the World Economic Forum's coordinators announced two surveys saying that the global financial community cares about hunger, extreme poverty, and the environment. At the same time, more than a fourth of the financial and political leaders questioned said they backed the Bush administration's war on terrorism, while only 5 percent thought women's inequality, human-rights abuses, and disease were top priorities. There's market logic to that—after all, the inequalities of the poor are relatively stable conditions; terrorism, on the other hand, disrupts markets, and there is nothing that businesspeople hate more than unpredictability. This year's panels at Davos seemed like Ebenezer Scrooge after a yoga retreat. They included "Mobilizing a disenchanted workforce" and "Why rich countries can't buy happiness."

The advocates in Porto Alegre saw the Davos talk as all rhetoric, and many were actively hostile to the gathering across the globe. On the first day of the World Social Forum, representatives from India, Indonesia, and other countries affected by the tsunamis asked that their nations be granted total debt relief. But when asked if they had anybody at Davos lobbying for their proposal—which has been espoused in a modest form by British Chancellor Gordon Brown—Filipina activist Lidy Napcii said no. "If the players in Davos really care about what the people think, it is their burden and their challenge to come to Porto Alegre," she said. The road from Switzerland to Brazil, however, may be a long one. **TAP**

Samuel Loewenberg is a reporter based in Madrid, Spain. He has written for The New York Times and The Economist, among other publications.

In one possibly portentous meeting of a larger movement, labor representatives from Holland, India, and Brazil strategized about common employers, including some of Europe's largest.

effect of supermarkets on southern Italian farmers to combating overdevelopment in the tourist sector.

If any message did come through, it was—perhaps ironically—the need to globalize workers' efforts to counteract the globalizing of industries. European labor unions in particular were clear on the need to organize across national borders. In one possibly portentous meeting of a larger movement to come, labor representatives from Holland, India, and Brazil met to strategize about common employers, which included some of Europe's biggest companies like Unilever, Thyssen, and Phillips. "We have to globalize to compete against multinationals," said Patrick van Klink, a worker and union organizer at the Unilever margarine factory in Rotterdam. Over the last five years, his union has forged links with Unilever workers in India and Brazil, sometimes providing them with strategic advice, publicity, and funding to help them organize. "The possibilities for us as a worker's movement are better than ever before—

the German-based, Norwegian-owned aluminum company Hydro. "Why is a Brazilian lung not as protected as a German one?" asked Eich.

Still, it wasn't always easy for representatives from richer and poorer countries to see priorities the same way. Other than activists from longtime anti-globalization nongovernmental organizations, relatively few Americans showed up in Porto Alegre. Canadian political scientist Elizabeth Smythe, who has attended numerous social forums, attributes the absence of people from the United States to a culture that "deliberately tries to depoliticize inequality." Glenn Switkes, the Latin American representative of the Berkeley, California-based International Rivers Network, did come, and spent his time trying to convince Brazilian bauxite miners that a proposed expansion of energy-intensive refineries would threaten both their communities and their environment. But for the Brazilian workers, jobs and job safety were at the top of the agenda. Brazilian union leaders told Switkes that if he wanted to mobilize the

A Double-Barreled Attack

BY ROBERT S. MCINTYRE

GEORGE W. BUSH'S SOCIAL SECURITY PROPOSALS have come under heavy and deserved attack over the past few months. But a few key points should be made clearer. First, repeat after me: Cutting Social Security benefits does not mean "saving" Social Security.

It means "cutting" Social Security. We can debate whether that's advisable, but we shouldn't let anyone misname it.

Second, Social Security's most daunting problem isn't its small projected funding shortfall. The real crisis is that the rest of the government stole the Social Security Trust Fund, spent it, and, because of Bush's tax cuts, won't be able to pay it back (or, pretty soon, do much of anything else either).

On paper, saving Social Security is easy. A mere 7-percent increase in payroll taxes would allow the trust fund to pay promised benefits all the way through 2075. Simply boosting the 6.2-percent Social Security payroll-tax rate on workers and employers to 6.65 percent would do the trick. So would raising the earnings cap on Social Security taxes from \$90,000 to \$175,000.

But making Social Security internally solvent won't ensure Social Security's future, as we may sadly discover when it comes time to redeem the trust fund. One way or another, taxpayers in the future will have to come up with the money to pay for Social Security benefits. Our job today should be to try to ensure that's possible. President Bush's mission seems to be to make sure it isn't.

The Bush government has chosen to pay for close to a third of its non-Social Security spending with borrowed money. As a result, Bush shamelessly asserts that by 2010, most of the national debt (including 100s to Social Security) will have

been accumulated on his watch. At the current pace, the debt will rise to more than three-quarters of the economy by 2015—up from less than half (and declining) in 2001, when Bill Clinton retired. Of course, as the debt balloons, so do federal interest payments.

Counting interest paid on the bonds held by Social Security, about a fifth of non-Social Security taxes paid this year will go to interest payments. Unless Bush's mistakes are reversed, interest will devour 30 percent of our non-Social Security taxes by 2015—and this frightening trend will continue to accelerate thereafter. As anyone who's ever run up a credit-card bill knows, interest means paying for past spending. It's never pleasant, and at some point it can become impossible.

Even if fiscal policy stabilizes somewhat after 2015, interest payments will continue to rise. By 2035 they would consume 37 percent of all non-Social Security taxes—at the same time that another 8 percent of those taxes would have to be spent to start redeeming Social Security's bonds. By 2075, a staggering two-thirds of all non-Social Security taxes would go to interest (55 percent) and bond redemption (11 percent). Because that's both unimaginable and unafford-

able, everything the government does will be endangered—including the otherwise solvent Social Security system.

The obvious solution to this impending catastrophe would be to reinstate Clinton's policy of collecting enough taxes to balance the regular budget. Then, instead of an ever-growing interest burden, we'd see interest expenses plummeting as a share of national income. In fact, from now through 2075, only 14 percent of federal tax revenues would have to be devoted to paying interest and redeeming Social Security's 100s. All the remaining tax dollars that Americans pay would be available to support the rest of the government.

Not surprisingly, our current president disdains any such morally responsible approach. Not only has he ruled out a modest payroll-tax boost to sustain the Social Security Trust Fund, he's called for further bankrupting the rest of the government with still more upper-income tax cuts—at a likely price tag of \$2.4 trillion over the upcoming decade.

One final point: What about Bush's proposal to divert half of the tax revenues that support Social Security's retirement fund into private investment accounts? Critics

point to many huge problems with this scheme, but one insidious motive behind it deserves more attention.

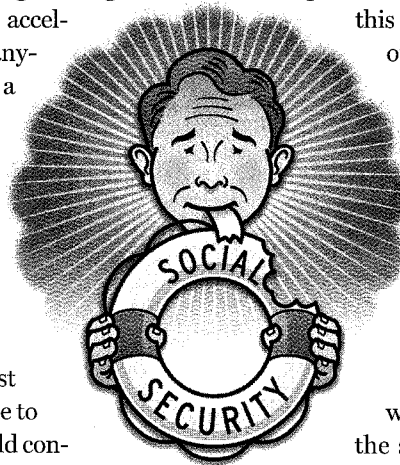
Currently, Social Security benefits are calculated on a progressive scale that gives the highest rate of return on contributions to lower-wage workers.

But private accounts, by their very nature, would offer everyone about the same rate of return. So

Bush's plan would cause a dramatic shift in income away from those who need it the most and toward those who need it the least.

Come to think of it, isn't that Bush's trademark? **TAP**

Robert S. McIntyre is the director of Citizens for Tax Justice.



The Liberal Uses of Power

*Clarity in dealing with terrorism, yes;
and also in living up to our highest ideals.*

BY PAUL STARR, MICHAEL TOMASKY, AND ROBERT KUTTNER

IT IS A SHAME THERE WILL NEVER BE A DEBATE ABOUT FOREIGN POLICY BETWEEN the George W. Bush who ran for president in 2000 and the one who now occupies the office. As a candidate five years ago, Bush said that the United States should act as a “humble nation” toward the rest of the world and avoid any involvement of our armed forces in nation building. He could have had a lively argument with the current

president over the use of the military for nation building in Iraq, and he might have raised an eyebrow over the president's declaration, at his second inauguration, that it is American policy to “seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.” The original Bush appealed to an insular Americanism with a constricted conception of the national interest; the new Bush appeals to a missionary vision of America's role. As much as the first understated America's obligations, the second risks overextending them. In our hypothetical debate, the two would nonetheless find they had a lot in common: an us-and-them view of good and evil in the world; an indifference toward allies and international institutions; and, of course, a readiness to use force.

Bush's worldview and instincts served the country well enough in the immediate aftermath of September 11, at least with respect to foreign policy: The terrorists were indeed evil, and the war in Afghanistan was a fully justified response. But the limitations of the president's approach to the world have been evident ever since. He undertook the Iraq War on false and misleading premises, with overoptimistic expectations and inadequate post-invasion plans, undermining our credibility, alliances, and focus on al-Qaeda. It was only as his original rationale for invading Iraq weakened and ultimately collapsed that he reframed the war as a crusade for democracy. If the Iraqis now establish a stable, democratic government, it will be a great positive step for their country and the region, but there is a considerable risk of an unintended and perverse result: a pro-Iranian Islamic state hostile to liberal values and American interests and willing to hold

free elections only as long as they produce results acceptable to the Shia clerical hierarchy.

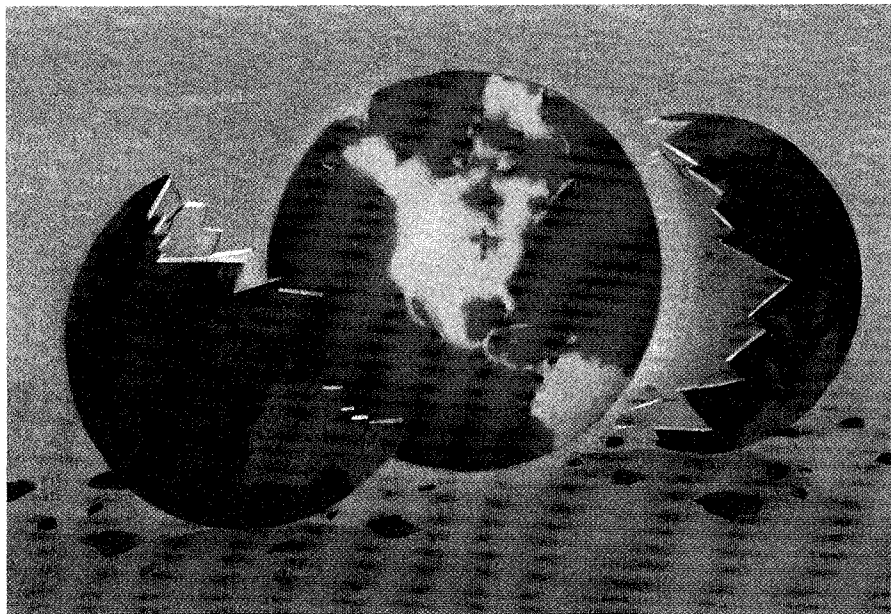
Moreover, even if Iraq's government does not go the way of Iran, the Iraq War will not have removed the perils that led to the direct engagement of the United States in the Islamic world. Three and a half years after September 11, Islamist terrorists remain a threat, U.S. military forces are stretched to the limit, anti-Americanism has intensified in Europe and the Middle East, and our traditional allies are increasingly distrustful of U.S. leadership and are setting an independent path in foreign affairs.

In other ways, the Bush administration has also undermined American power and influence. Its fiscal policies have created a dangerous dependence on foreign borrowing to finance our budget and trade deficits, and its energy policies have increased our dependence on foreign oil. The inevitable result is a double standard vis-à-vis China and unsavory Middle Eastern regimes. Bush's defenders like to portray liberals, particularly those who opposed the Iraq War, as weak and unserious about national security. But the truth is that the war itself and other administration policies are weakening our power and security, undermining our alliances and freedom of action.

These problems with the administration's policies—and the absence of an overall strategy in foreign affairs from today's Democratic leaders—invite liberals to offer a compelling alternative in the spirit of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Harry Truman, George Kennan, Dean Acheson, and John F. Kennedy. Mixing liberalism with realism in foreign policy, these leaders were not afraid to use power. They knew when to apply military force, when to “arm to parley” (as Kennedy liked to quote Churchill), when to use diplo-

macy backed by the threat of force, and when to pursue genuinely humanitarian initiatives such as the Peace Corps—the 1960s’ version of “soft power”—to further American interests. In that tradition, we believe that America can and should be an assertive force for good in the world. And, as liberals, we also believe that America faces a mortal threat from Islamist terrorists that will require every asset we can bring to bear, including military force.

In his second inaugural address, the president set out an attractive vision of the United States as a liberator of oppressed nations. Woodrow Wilson and FDR would have recognized the sentiments. We can imagine a Democrat in Bush’s place upholding the same aspirations (though the Republican reception would have been altogether different); indeed, we anticipate that liberals in the future will have more occasion to quote Bush’s speech than conservatives will. But the president’s glittering generalities were not a policy. Will freedom now weigh more heavily than trade



in our relations with China? More heavily than stability in our relations with Pakistan or Egypt? More heavily than support for the war on terrorism in our relations with Russia? If the speech signaled no change in policy—as senior White House advisers said afterward—was it merely another retrospective justification of the Iraq War? Was it the first shot in a new war aimed at regime change, this time in Iran? Or did it serve mainly to obscure the real nature of the policy toward the world that Bush is pursuing?

While trumpeting the spread of democracy, Bush has also claimed a singular position for the United States. The administration has repudiated long-standing principles of international law, downgraded multilateral institutions, and rejected a series of international treaties regarding the International Criminal Court, global warming, and other issues. The United States emerged from the 1990s as an overwhelmingly dominant military power, and to the rest of the world, Bush now appears intent on exploiting that position to advance American interests and demand exemptions from the rules that other nations follow. Growing opposition to U.S. policy was already on the rise throughout Europe and elsewhere in the world long before Iraq.

In much of the world, the banner of democracy looks like a deceptive cover for American hegemony.

In reaction against Bush’s embrace of Wilsonian rhetoric, some liberals may be tempted to go to the opposite extreme, downplaying any democratic aims of American foreign policy and asserting only the goals of peace and stability. That is not our view. In charting an alternative to Bush’s foreign policy, liberals should uphold liberal aims. But those aims are not well served by a policy that has discarded the framework of international law and institutions built up since World War II and has made American power appear illegitimate in the eyes even of traditional allies. We need to distinguish carefully between what realism demands in the short run, particularly when dealing with terrorism, and longer-term possibilities for freedom in the world. Those possibilities ought to include the advance of democracy and human rights, along with goals entirely missing from the

Bush administration’s agenda, such as the protection of the global environment and the reduction of global poverty.

The first imperative of America’s defense and foreign policy, however, is to protect our security, and today Islamist terrorists with global reach pose the greatest immediate threat to our lives and liberties. We—the United States, the advanced world generally, and liberals in particular, who value the rule of law, equality, open-mindedness, tolerance, and secularism—face a struggle with the jihadists that we have no alternative but to win. The fanatical nature of Islamic fundamentalism and the terrorism it has spawned should be clear to all of us. Its goals for the world are so profoundly inimical to ours, and its methods so intolerable, that negotiation, of the sort the United States engaged in with its best-

known ideological foe of the last century, is impossible. The terrorists not only threaten liberal values in Islamic countries; they also imperil the survival of freedom in ours. If they launch further major attacks on our shores, the PATRIOT Act and Guantanamo Bay will likely prove mere prelude to much worse. Defending our liberties and best traditions at home, then, depends directly on defeating terrorism abroad.

Our call for clarity in dealing with terrorism reflects the urgency of a historical moment that demands we sort out the things that are genuinely important—the conditions that are necessary for the flourishing of liberal values. The lines that separate liberal principle from fundamentalist design have rarely been clearer, and they are lines that liberals must defend unambiguously, and with force when necessary. President Bush has been wrong, often calamitously so, about many things, but he is right that America must do all it can to prevent another 9-11. When facing a substantial, immediate, and provable threat, the United States has both the right and the obligation to strike preemptively and, if need be, unilaterally against terrorists or states that support them.

Because of the direct threat of Islamic terrorism to liberal values, liberals ought to be particularly conscious of the need for an effective defense. But some have drawn the wrong lessons from history. Beginning with the Vietnam War, many progressives instinctively opposed any assertion of American power. They pointed, accurately enough, to instances where the United States engineered the overthrow of democratically elected left-wing governments while supporting dictators of convenience, such as the shah of Iran. After Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990, too few liberals saw that a war was a just and necessary response. Many, however, were more favorable to the use of force later in the decade, when Bill Clinton's interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo stopped ethnic cleansing and prevented Serbian aggression from spiraling into a wider war in the region. September 11 solidified the growing conviction among liberals that the United States had to be prepared to use force to defend security and liberal values.

Still, some on the left opposed the war in Afghanistan, and just as Vietnam led to an overly broad rejection of force, so the misconceived invasion of Iraq now lends credence to a reflexive

extended if it tries to use force to squelch all potential threats.

The larger problem, moreover, arises from the environment that has fostered terrorism. The jihadists can lay claim, it is sad to observe, to deep intellectual roots in the Muslim world, the indirect support of schools and cultural institutions, and a significant body of public opinion. A resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would help remove a major source of inflammation between Islamic fundamentalism and the West, but the terrorist threat wouldn't end there. We have a stake in the success of liberalizing educational and cultural forces in the Islamic world, and we ought to be using our resources and influence to bolster those movements.

Some liberal hawks today invoke the liberal anti-communists of the Cold War as a model for the struggle against the jihadists, but the analogy would support their position, including the invasion of Iraq, only if the United States had triumphed over the Soviet Union by attacking and "rolling back" communism. In fact, success in the Cold War came as a result of containment, deterrence, multilateralism, and patience—liberal policies tempered

by realism. The Cold War, however, offers us only an inexact parallel for the challenge we face today. Containment and negotiation will not suffice against terrorist networks; we are effectively in a state of war against them and must use every means available to bring about their defeat. But even in that struggle, we need the strongest possible international cooperation and legitimacy, and the legacy

of international institutions from the Cold War provides us with a foundation and a model for further efforts.

As the sole superpower in the world, the United States is in an extraordinary position to shape the rules and practices of the international system. That system can augment our power, as it did during the Cold War, through a system of partnerships with other countries, based on consultation and joint decision making. Instead, under Bush's leadership, the United States is intent on setting a unilateral course, which other countries are welcome to join if they accept our terms. That approach appeals to a deep, conservative nationalist tendency in America. From the insular conservatism that Bush advocated in 2000, it is but a short step to the missionary neoconservatism that he espouses today. Both are dismissive of a cooperative international framework. But acting unilaterally, the United States will face twin problems of its own making at home and abroad. First, as in Iraq, American taxpayers will assume an outsized share of the military burden of maintaining world order. And second, we will continue generating hostility elsewhere in the world and spurring other countries, including our traditional allies, to do what they have already begun: strengthen their own partnerships, like the European Union, separate from and perhaps increasingly in opposition to us. The liberal alternative to Bush is not to lessen our power but to listen to the world and, in the process, to add to the power that we and other liberal democracies can marshal to strengthen our security and freedom and to get on with the forgotten agenda of protecting the global environment and alleviating the poverty and misery that are still the fate of hundreds of millions of the world's people. **TAP**

***The liberal alternative to Bush is not to lessen
our power but to listen to the world, adding to the
power that we and other democracies can assert.***

hostility to American power. We understand the historical roots of this mistrust, but today's world presents problems that require different habits of mind. The real problem in Afghanistan was not that the United States sent in troops but that it did not send in enough to complete the job and capture or kill Osama bin Laden. Iraq was the wrong war waged the wrong way; it began on false premises and may end badly—but we can neither walk away from it nor become complacent about other dangers.

Liberals are bound to disagree about these questions, and sometimes disagree strenuously. Lobbing rhetorical grenades at one another is always a tempting pleasure; recently, liberal hawks seem especially to be enjoying the sport, to the harrumphing approval of commentators on the right. But, at the end of the day, liberals have to offer an alternative capable of dislodging neoconservatism as the nation's governing ideology. That alternative can embrace, in our view, both a commitment to building an international structure of cooperation and a recognition that, where terrorism is concerned, preemptive, unilateral, and decisive force may be legitimate.

The right of preemption, however, is not the same as a blanket entitlement to preventive war to overthrow hostile regimes that pose no immediate threat, particularly where other countermeasures, international in scope, may be sufficient to achieve the purpose. As the Iraq experience shows, mistakes in preventive war have enormous costs in the lost credibility of American leadership, lost resources, and, not least of all, lost lives. The United States has unmatched military power, but our armed forces are relatively limited in numbers, and even this country will find itself over-

Theocracy Now

What will the Shia parties want once they have power in Iraq? Exactly what America doesn't want.

BY JUAN COLE

NOT SINCE THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION OF 1979 has the Middle East witnessed a political upheaval of the magnitude of the Iraqi election held on January 30. The Shia majority has now come decisively to power in the new parliament, and it may make the Kurds its junior partner. The core of the new government consists of two old-time revolutionary Shia parties now somewhat mellowed, the Dawa Party and the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), which will pursue the "Islamization" of formerly secular Iraq (they have not mellowed that much).

The U.S. media coverage concentrated on the magical moment in which Iraqis braved mortar shells and car bombs to vote. But few Americans realized that, in fact, the Bush administration had tried hard to avoid having anything like one-person, one-vote elections in Iraq. It had tried handing the country over to expatriate politicians with little local support, installing an American administrator to rule by fiat, and persuading Iraqis to allow U.S.-installed provincial council members to elect the parliament.

Instead, the demand for free elections was led by the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the spiritual leader of Iraq's 16 million Shiites. When the White House initially rejected his demand, al-Sistani brought tens of thousands of protesters into the streets in January of 2004, convincing the Bush administration to acquiesce in general elections, though it managed to postpone them until the following year. In the meantime, al-Sistani—a native of Iran who had come to Najaf in 1951—and his advisers looked at the electoral system installed by the Americans and saw that if they could create a united coalition of the Shia religious parties, they might dominate the parliament. Shia comprise 65 percent of the Iraqi population, and most venerate al-Sistani. He appointed a six-man committee to negotiate with parties such as the Dawa and the SCIRI. In the end, 11 such parties agreed to run together on a single list, the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA). Most of these religious parties favor political Islam. The grand ayatollah openly "blessed" the UIA, lending his vast moral authority to this list, which used his image in its campaign advertisements.

FOR MANY AMERICAN COMMENTATORS, THE ELECTIONS were a vindication of Bush administration policies and a demonstration that Iraqis wanted U.S. tutelage on democracy. In fact, many Iraqi Shia said they voted in large part because of their fear of the hellfire with which their clergymen threatened them if they did not come out to the polls. Other voters were convinced that only an elected government would have the legitimacy to demand that U.S. troops depart the country. A Zogby International opinion poll, taken days before the election, showed that 69 percent of Shia and 82 percent of Sunni Arabs favored either an immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces or a withdrawal soon after the elections. The Iraqi public not only objects to being militarily occupied as a matter of principle but also entertains real fears that a continued U.S. presence will bring them to ruin. Only the Kurdish minority begs to differ. That the poll predicted voting behavior so well lends credence to the undertone of strident anti-Americanism it found in Iraq. Somehow, a figure of 72-percent turnout was circulated to the U.S. press, despite the obvious fact that on election day, the electoral commission could have had no idea what the turnout was. The commission quickly revised the estimated turnout down to more like 57 percent.

Early analysis of election returns suggested that the UIA might receive as many as half the seats in the 275-member parliament. The first task of the new parliament will be to elect a president and two vice presidents, which will require a two-thirds majority. The UIA can block any attempt to form a government without it, assuming its constituent parties stand together. The Shia religious coalition will, however, also need at least one partner in the parliament to form a government. That will likely be the Kurds, who form about 15 percent of the population but are likely to be substantially overrepresented in the parliament, with 20 percent or more of the seats. The Kurds are delighted with their strong showing, and are already demanding the presidency for Jalal Talabani, the leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. Among the Sunnis, though, the most respected party, the Association of Muslim Scholars, had called for a boycott, arguing that no legitimate election could be held under conditions of military occupation. Another important Sunni religious party, the Iraqi Islamic Party, had initially agreed to participate, but pulled out

in late December. Sunni Arabs had virtually no one to vote for even if they had wanted to turn out, which most did not.

Paul Bremer, the former American administrator, had designed the election rules so that there were no local districts. A party or coalition presented a ranked list of candidates to the electoral commission, then the entire country voted together, and party lists will be seated in the parliament in accordance with the percentage of the national vote they won. Thus, if a list won 10 percent of the national vote, its top 27 candidates would be seated (the rest would go home). In an election based on local districts, as with U.S. congressional elections, a light turnout would still return a representative legislature. In the national party-list system, if a particular region did not come out to vote, it simply would not be represented. Worse, the results are proportional, so that nonparticipation would actually increase the

Badr, trained by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, carried out assassinations and bombings for 20 years.

The behavior of the SCIRI in Basra, where it came to run the local government in the course of 2004 and into 2005, telegraphs what its hegemony is likely to mean. *The Washington Post's* Anthony Shadid reported in January that Basra's mayor and many members of its security forces came from the Badr Corps. In Basra, the SCIRI and the Badr Corps have closed the once-numerous liquor stores and imposed veiling on women high-school and college students. Some local secular politicians suspect that the Badr Corps is implicated in a series of assassinations of former Baath officials.

The other major component of the victorious UIA is the Dawa Party, founded in the late 1950s by Shia activists in imitation of the Communist Party. For the Dawa, the utopia is not a worker's paradise but a Shia republic, where Islamic canon law (Shariah) supplants British-derived civil law and where economics is ordered in accordance with Islamic codes and principles. The Dawa is a lay rather than a clerical party, and has long sought a sort of Islamic parliament (called *shura*, or "consultation," in Arabic), but does not want it to be dominated by clerics. Its more moderate faction is led by Ibrahim Jafari, but a more militant branch (also on the UIA ticket) is headed by Abdul Karim Unzi.

These Shia religious parties do not seek clerical rule. Rather, their major program is the implementation of their version of Islamic law. This goal is more characteristic of political Islam worldwide than is clerical rule, which is rare and of which Iran is the main exemplar. Sudan's fundamentalist military government, for instance, began imposing Islamic law in 1991, and ultimately

enforced it even on Christians. Islamic legal thought is dynamic and often innovative, but adherents of political Islam most often pursue a rather literalist interpretation of it, often derived from medieval texts.

At the very least, the Shia religious parties will want "personal status" law—which governs marriage, divorce, inheritance, burial, and other such issues—to replace the uniform civil code. The kind of Islamic law most fundamentalists favor also has negative implications for women. Girls' inheritances would be half that of their brothers. Men could take second, third, and fourth wives. In Shia law, temporary marriage contracts may be drawn up wherein women are wives for two weeks or six months, after which the contract runs out. Men could initiate divorce, but women would find it more difficult. Men would owe women only three months support on divorce, to ensure that they were not pregnant, after which they would pay no alimony. In some Muslim countries, a woman's testimony is now considered to be worth only half that of a man, which has made rapists hard to prosecute. Some of these problems could be addressed by women through a Muslim version of a prenuptial agreement, such that



Turnout Motivator: Al-Sistani warned his followers of dire consequences if they didn't vote. It worked.

representation of rivals that did receive great popular support.

The Sunni Arab boycott of the elections was so extensive that in early returns, the solidly Sunni province of Salahuddin, site of Saddam Hussein's birthplace, Tikrit, returned the Shia UIA as the leading list—a sign that a small Shia minority came out to vote and the mainstream Sunni Arab majority did not. The Association of Muslim Scholars roundly denounced the elections as fraud on their completion, and as soon as traffic, which had been halted on election day, could move again, the bombings began once more.

NOW THAT THE SHIA RELIGIOUS PARTIES HAVE COME to power, what will they want? Clearly, religious law will be high on their agenda. Consider the SCIRI, founded in 1982 in Tehran as an umbrella organization for Iraqi Shia expatriates chased abroad by the persecution of Hussein's Sunni-dominated Baath Party. SCIRI leaders grew close to the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and other clerical hard-liners in Tehran, accepting the doctrine that clerics should rule. It formed a paramilitary group, the Badr Corps, to carry out operations against the Baath, slipping over the border into Iraq from Iran. The

they could specify payment of alimony on divorce and prevent the taking of a second wife, by inserting these clauses in the marriage contract. However, only relatively well-off and educated women would likely be able to benefit from this practice.

The Shia religious parties may go beyond implementing Islamic personal-status law for Muslims. They may wish to see criminal law Islamized as well. The Dawa Party has a long-standing dedication to social justice based on the implementation of Islamic commercial law and economic principles.

This program could run into problems, of course. If the Shia ally with the Kurds to form a government, they might have to create a Kurdistan province for their allies and allow it to opt out of implementing religious law. Many Kurdish politicians have a socialist past, and the Kurdish rank and file is traditionalist (think Brazilian Catholicism) rather than fundamentalist, so implementation of strict religious law would not be popular in the Kurdish region.

The Kurds are also eager to turn their election success to political advantage. A referendum carried out at the same time as the election in the Kurdish regions showed that 95 percent of Kurds want independence, but the major Kurdish political parties understand that to press for complete autonomy carries with it immense dangers. The Turkish and Iranian governments fear an independent Kurdistan in northern Iraq, lest their own substantial Kurdish populations seek to join it. The United States has expressed a commitment to a united Iraq, and the Arab Iraqis abhor the idea of partition.

The Kurds have put forward less radical demands that nevertheless will require hard negotiation and compromise with the rest of the Iraqis. They wish to redraw the provincial map of Iraq, moving away from the current 18 provinces. They wish to take three provinces where they predominate and detach parts of three others, to create a single ethnically based province of Kurdistan. The former national-security adviser to the interim government, Muwaffaq al-Rubaie, himself a Shiite, has suggested that five provinces be established—two Shia, two Sunni Arab, and one Kurdish.

The Kurds also seek to incorporate the oil city of Kirkuk into their Kurdistan, and to keep all or most of the oil revenues in their province. This demand has already provoked riots in Kirkuk, where Turkmen and Arabs form a majority. But it might be possible to divide Kirkuk or declare it a federal city, and to find a wealth-sharing formula for the northern petroleum income. Kurds will have to remember that the northern fields are old and declining, and the large, newly exploited Rumayla field in the south holds the future of the country's oil income. The Kurds further have demanded substantial provincial autonomy under a loose federalism, and say they will never accept federal troops on their soil.

IF THE SHIA COALITION CAN FORM A GOVERNMENT IN alliance with the Kurdish coalition, it will have to make concessions to the Kurds. The Shia parties, such as the Dawa, have in the past stood for centralized rule from Baghdad and rejected loose federalism on the Canadian or Swiss models. If the Shia and the Kurds cannot reach agreement, UIA leaders will

have to cobble together the missing 16 percent or more of seats from small parties, which will hold the UIA hostage to accomplish their narrow goals. A large Kurdish contingent that feels ignored could prove to be a spoiler, and there is constant danger of violence in a place like Kirkuk that could embroil the whole north in fighting.

A Shia-Kurdish accommodation could be a promising foundation for the new Iraq. But a Shia-Kurdish government, of course, risks further alienating the Sunni Arab heartland of the country, which is already embroiled in a guerrilla war. Sunni Arabs will be very poorly represented in the new parliament, and because the parliament will draft a permanent constitution, their absence could create long-term resentments. The new Shia political class is mature enough to recognize this problem, and has already pledged that an accommodation will be made. Sunni Arabs can be given posts in the executive as vice president and ministers. They can also be appointed to the constituent assembly that will actually draft the constitution. Whether these steps will mollify very many of them, however, is in severe doubt.

And in the short term, the threat of violence continues to loom. As United Nations envoy Lakhdar Brahimi noted in the

The election results threaten to open all the cans of worms in Iraq simultaneously. A whole host of burning issues will come immediately to the fore.

spring of 2004 after speaking to the major party leaders, countries fall into civil turmoil inadvertently, not because it is planned out. Kirkuk is a tinderbox that could explode into urban faction fighting at the drop of a hat. Urban crowd violence is a bigger threat to U.S. military control than militias fighting a civil war. The United States could scramble AC-130 combat aircraft to stop set-piece battles by militiamen. It could not as easily deal with hundreds of thousands of civilians in the streets.

The election results, therefore, threaten to open all the cans of worms in Iraq simultaneously. Religious law, Kurdish autonomy, gender roles, and a whole host of burning issues will come immediately to the fore. If these are addressed in the spirit of parliamentary compromise, Iraqis have an opportunity to forge a new, multicultural Iraq that honors Islam without ramming it down people's throats—and that recognizes provincial rights without breaking up the country. If a spirit of intransigence and maximalism prevails among any major group, however, the country faces the most severe threats. And because Iraq is so central to the oil-producing Persian Gulf, its severe threats are severe threats to Americans as well. **TAP**

Juan Cole is a professor of modern Middle Eastern and South Asian history at the University of Michigan. His most recent book is Sacred Space and Holy War. He maintains a blog on Middle Eastern and Iraqi affairs called Informed Comment (www.juancole.com).

Against the Neocons

"The fact remains that the Iraqi operation has gravely undermined American global credibility."

AN INTERVIEW WITH ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI

ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI, PRESIDENT CARTER'S national-security adviser and the author, most recently, of *The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership*, spoke with Michael Tomasky on January 31 about the Iraqi elections and plausible alternatives to neoconservatism.

MICHAEL TOMASKY: Will the Iraqi elections validate the neo-conservative view?

ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI: I don't think it's going to be validated in the sense that it will demonstrate the proposition that democracy can be spread through force. I think what we will get from it is an arrangement that will be quite short of anything like, for example, what we have seen recently in the Ukraine, but will still be tolerable—namely, a more complicated semi-confederal structure in Iraq with Shiite predominance (in effect rather theocratic), and some limited, partial accommodation between the dominant Shiites and the resentful Sunnis. That is not a democracy in my understanding of the word, but it is an improvement over what we have been seeing.

Consolidation in turn is more likely to happen if we disengage sooner rather than later. Therefore, a great deal depends on whether the neocons who engineered the war against Iraq will be overruled by the realists in the Bush administration.

MT: You mentioned a relatively quick withdrawal. But I have read that [Iraqi Prime Minister] Iyad Allawi made a deal that any party that could plausibly win the election would not make that demand.

ZB: I think that once politics becomes the dominant reality of Iraq and the elections facilitate that, there will be pressures on individual Iraqi politicians to say that "we are authentically patriotic and nationalist," and that "we would like the foreign invaders to leave." To thank them nicely for their role, but say to them that "your role as occupiers is no longer necessary."

MT: What does all this leave internationalists and realists to say about the world?

ZB: It leaves the realists still with the reality of other practical problems for which neoconservative solutions have been dis-

credited. One would have to be close to insane to say that our experience in Iraq has been an unqualified success. If the Iraqis are smart enough to ask us to leave, and if we are smart enough actually to leave, the fact remains that the Iraq operation has gravely undermined American global credibility. It has even more seriously compromised us morally. It has shown the limits of our warfare capability for dealing with political conflict. It has cost tens of billions of dollars more than originally estimated. And it would take a very naive president to again succumb to the same people who first demagogued about the need to go to war, who vastly exaggerated the welcome we would receive, who mismanaged the political dimensions of the war.

MT: You wrote in *The Choice* that the war on terrorism is a mistake. It's been bruited recently by some that we should think of the war on terrorism and the post-September 11 period as analogous to the 1947–48 period when the Cold War started. Do you think that's a reasonable framework to think about terrorism, or is it not?

ZB: Terrorism to me is a symptom of a much deeper problem we confront. We live in a world that has become, and is becoming, politically awakened on an unprecedented scale. This is an altogether new reality. It creates turmoil, conflict, and animosity, and it is often expressed by terrorism. Our own involvement, particularly in the Middle East, has turned some of that terrorism more directly against us. But terrorism doesn't define the totality of the problem.

So, in my view, we are not in a phase of a global struggle against terrorism. That formulation, in my view, tends to unite our enemies and divide our friends, instead of uniting our friends and dividing our enemies. It makes it more difficult for us to encourage the moderate Arabs, and it increasingly pits us against all of Islam. And, most importantly of all, it is not responsive to the reality of billions of people for the first time in the history of mankind becoming politically activated.

MT: Let's say John Kerry had been elected president and brought you back into the National Security Agency. What would you have done?

ZB: I would have addressed on a broader front immediately the three major issues we confront in the Middle East, because it is

out of the Middle East that the terrorist threat is directed against us. And those three are the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, the need for a more credible and predictable disentanglement from Iraq, and normalization of relations with Iran—all as the beginning of the process.

And secondly, a more energetic re-engagement with the Europeans and the Japanese as the richest parts of mankind in trying to deal with the problems of the politically awakened populace, which is obviously resentful of the inequities which it now perceives very sharply because of mass communications, and is beginning to be politically assertive and needs to be engaged with responses that, in some fashion, truly begin to address some of the resentments and the problems. That is not an agenda which could be resolved in one year or even four years, but it is an agenda that could focus us on dealing with the political and even moral dilemmas of the inequalities in the human condition.

MT: So what would be some politically feasible, specific steps the United States could take toward ameliorating the effects of globalization in the poorer countries?

ZB: I think much more willingness to give privileges to some of the less-developed countries in terms of economic arrangements and more emphasis on humane treatment of workers in these countries. Essentially, not using globalization as an opportunity for pressing marginal advantages, but using it as part of a global social policy that tries to deal with problems that are increasingly self-evident to many people in the world and which intensify the social ferment that the new political consciousness stimulates.

MT: And how could American public opinion be marshaled to support such measures?

ZB: By leadership which doesn't rely so much on propagating fear of the outside world, particularly a fear that can be presented in almost satanic terms, but appeals to the good side of the American tradition and exploits the demonstrable preference of the American people for multilateral solutions. To translate that into programs, public opinion has to be led, and the challenge has to be articulated.

MT: Do you think John Kerry did a good job in the campaign of articulating that alternative and saying things that would appeal to that better side of Americans?

ZB: I think that [George W.] Bush was beatable, but his liabilities were not sufficiently, forcefully, clearly, and repetitively exploited. At the very least he misled the American people by demagoguery. At the worst, he lied. He wasn't pressed on that issue. The conduct of the war, particularly events such as Guantanamo [Bay] and Abu Ghraib, discredited the moral aspect of the war. Who set the tone and who started the process? That issue wasn't pressed. These were the kinds of issues regarding which there was not a sustained, repetitive, clearly focused attack.

MT: More broadly than Kerry, about the Democrats: Is the Democratic Party today articulating a forceful and plausible foreign-policy alternative?

ZB: I think since 9-11, the Democratic leadership has been in disarray and essentially following the president's lead, with some of its top figures actually acting as cheerleaders for the president's demagogically defined war. I still have pictures in my own mind of a couple of them appearing in the Rose Garden with him, literally cheering while he was demagoguing. I think that made it much more difficult for the Democratic Party to challenge the fundamental premises of the strategy the United States adopted after 9-11—which, in the course of a single year, was transformed into a neocon crusade.

MT: A lot of what you talk about certainly won't happen for the next four years. How much harder will it be after four more years?

ZB: I think in some respects, though for America's sake I hope I'm proven wrong, it may be easier. Because if the president sticks with the neocon line and there is no course correction, our credibility will be even lower, we'll be even more isolated, and we'll probably be more vulnerable to terrorist attacks motivated by intensified hatred. At some point the public will begin to make a connection between such policies and our vulnerability.

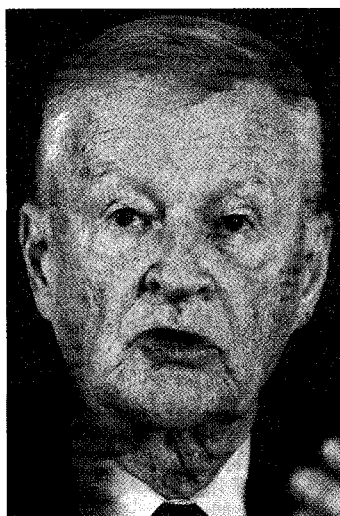
I think the real problem is that an enlightened foreign policy—which respects the necessity of American leadership, which knows that it has to be based on power first of all but which also recognizes that legitimacy and moral support are necessary ingredients—is more difficult to reduce to a single slogan than a policy derived from fear.

Since I am basically an optimist, and I believe in the fundamental common sense of

this country and don't want to succumb to pessimism, I still believe it is possible there will be a course correction, in part because we will be forced into it. And if the Europeans speak with a single voice and encourage us to be more active in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and if we are able to engage the Iranians in a protracted dialogue on security issues which allows us to mitigate the problems inherent in their nuclear program, then I think we could have a situation that is less pregnant with potentially dire consequences.

MT: Why normalize relations with Iran?

ZB: Iran is a serious, historically defined country with a significant history and a sense of its own worth. It is not an artificial state. It can be a factor of stability in the region. I would prefer a moderate Iran with nuclear weapons to a violently hostile Iran making every effort surreptitiously to acquire nuclear weapons in reaction to some military intervention by the United States, because I think the consequences of the latter would be far more dangerous than the effects of the former. **TAP**



Zbigniew Brzezinski

Ritual Abuse

Abu Ghraib was supposed to be the end of U.S. torture, once the scandal was exposed. But what if it was just the beginning?

BY TARA MCKELVEY

THE WALLS AND CEILING WERE PAINTED BLACK. Acid rock blared around the clock. It was cold in the tiled room, located in a building outside Baghdad International Airport, on January 1, 2004. But despite the chilly temperature, Mohamed (he asked me to use a fake name), a 36-year-old sound engineer from the al-Bunuk district of Baghdad, was sweating. The interrogators had forced him and another hooded detainee to run back and forth in the room for hours. When Mohamed and the other detainee bumped into each other, a husky American in a T-shirt and camouflage pants would grab the loose cloth on the back of their hoods and crack their skulls together.

"Bang," says Mohamed. "He kept doing that for a while."

Sitting in a hotel room in Amman, Jordan, on December 6, 2004, less than a year after being captured by U.S.-led forces in Iraq, Mohamed describes how three interrogators later pushed his limp body back and forth across the slick tiles. "I was like a ball, you know, a punching ball," he says. "I could hear them talking and laughing."

As Mohamed describes his detention from December 30, 2003, to January 6, 2004, he heaves a raspy sigh and dabs his eyes with a tissue. He covers the damp tissue with a fresh one and places them both carefully on the table. A slender, dark-haired graduate of Baghdad University's College of Arts, he has fastidious manners and eats a cheese sandwich at lunch with a knife and fork. He has a ruptured eardrum (an American soldier periodically blasted a horn in his ear) and a scarred wrist that looks as if it has been skinned (he was kept in "flexicuffs" for days).

The interrogators worked in shifts, Mohamed says, and each had a specialization. Every few hours, he'd hear a "slightly different" kind of acid rock and think, "Oh, there's the guy who works with cold water." That interrogator would pour water on Mohamed's skin when he was dehydrated and watch him lick off the drops. Another beat him with a metal folding chair (until it broke into pieces). There was a female soldier who used sexual humiliation: She exposed her breasts and simulated sex. One interrogator prepared a CD on which a child cried over and over again, "Save me!" When Mohamed heard the recording, he

says, he thought about his three daughters, ranging from six months to seven years of age.

During his detention, he was asked repeatedly about former Vice President Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, the No. 1 fugitive in Iraq. "I have no relationship with him," Mohamed says. "I've seen him on TV—that's it." A blond soldier in glasses and a crew cut would say, "Give us the information we want or we're going to kill you."

In Baghdad, there is no record of Mohamed's detention, says Barry Johnson, a Multi-National Force public-affairs officer. Detainees held for fewer than 14 days are not always processed, he explains, and Mohamed was detained for only eight days. But there are photos of his house—shot by Al-Jazeera and described by the BBC—that show a bloody floor and smashed gates following the December 30, 2003, "raid-and-search campaign" by U.S. troops.

IN SOME WAYS, AMERICANS HAVE REASON TO CELEBRATE the two-year anniversary of the Iraq War on March 19, 2005. Saddam Hussein is in custody, and Iraqis recently voted in their first free elections in decades. But the insurgency continues, and there are new signs that some of the techniques that scandalized the world after the Abu Ghraib story broke may be continuing, and that Iraqi security forces are now involved. On February 5, 2005, *The New York Times* ran a photo of one of the Iraqis' captives, a terrified-looking Egyptian kidnapper, Abdel-Qadir Mahmoud, alongside an article describing harrowing threats and interrogation techniques.

The Iraqi police may have ratcheted up the harsh treatment of detainees—but not by much, say human-rights workers in the United States. Sleep deprivation, military dogs, and other aggressive methods have been used in an effort to ferret out information from detainees at Guantanamo Bay and in Afghanistan, where eight men have died in U.S. custody, according to Human Rights Watch researcher John Sifton. The methods have been criticized for their inefficiency and brutality (an FBI agent calls them "torture techniques" in a December 5, 2003, e-mail recently released by the American Civil Liberties Union). Yet public discussion of the techniques, says Sifton, has fallen into a "conceptual lacuna."

"People are leaving out whole aspects of the issue, trying to

fit it into a simple narrative," he explains. "They say, 'It's just the night shift at Abu Ghraib.'"

It's a shame, say human-rights workers, because these techniques may be implemented in the future—if not on Iraqis like Mohamed (that will be left to local police) then on those picked up elsewhere. In other words, say human-rights experts, this is how we do business in Iraq and, possibly, in other countries down the road.

"It seems that if we feel threatened, we will do what we need to do," says Karen J. Greenberg, executive director of New York University's Center on Law and Security. "We don't have a mechanism in place for accountability, and there's nothing to stop these methods from being used in another conflict. Why do we care? Because if this is a continuing U.S. policy, it will destroy our position in the world."

Officially, stricter guidelines for interrogations have been issued: A December 31, 2004, Justice Department memo redefines torture and limits what interrogators can do. But it's not clear where things are headed. Congressional leaders are considering legislation that might provide an allowance for using "coercive techniques" that could "shock the conscience" (a phrase used in a 1952 Supreme Court case) when, as Representative Jane Harman said in a speech at Georgetown University on February 7, 2005, "the president believes there is 'an urgent and extraordinary need.'" "It's a type of legal definition that works in theory but is actually dangerous," says Human Rights Watch's Sifton. "If you give detainees an excuse to mistreat detainees, they'll exploit it."

A Democratic aide told me that the legislation was still in the formative stages and that Harman was not ready to comment on specifics.

Interrogations have their place. Saddam Hussein was tracked to his "spider hole" on December 13, 2003, because Americans had unraveled a "social network," says John Pike, director of GlobalSecurity.org, a think tank that looks at defense policy. "Everybody says, 'Well, torture doesn't work.' It may not work on an individual, but if you put enough people to the question, it can provide information. The people being tortured might not have known where Saddam was, but they know somebody who might know." When asked if other methods could have been used, Pike laughs. "They could have said, 'Pretty please,'" he says.

The harshest techniques—such as "water boarding," in which prisoners are strapped to a board, submerged in water, and made to feel like they're drowning—were discussed as a way of handling high-level al-Qaeda suspects, says Timothy Flanigan, who served as deputy to Alberto Gonzales in 2001 and 2002. "The only thought was that if we used these techniques, it would save American lives," says Flanigan, a father of 14 children and now general counsel for Tyco International. "We did not want to leave permanent damage."

The water board, which Flanigan described to me, dates at least back to the 1970s in this country, when it was used to toughen up officers at two Navy schools, according to a March 22, 1976, *Newsweek* article. On March 26, 1976, Amnesty International Secretary-General Martin Ennals wrote to President Gerald Ford's defense secretary and complained, saying the practice "increases the expertise of the trainers in the application of torture." The defense secretary, one Donald Rumsfeld, apparently never wrote back.

For the most part, experts advise against torture. FBI agents who visited Guantanamo Bay questioned the harsh strategies "in terms of effectiveness," according to a May 13, 2004, e-mail obtained by the ACLU. Military officials say they are outraged. "Our policy has always been to treat detainees humanely," says Lieutenant Colonel John Skinner, a U.S. Defense Department spokesman. "All credible allegations of mistreatment are always investigated."

Yet recent investigations, including a report by Vice Admiral

Albert Church on interrogation techniques at Guantanamo Bay and in Afghanistan and Iraq, have been postponed indefinitely. In August 2004, Defense Department spokesmen said the Church report would be released within weeks. In early February, Skinner said a draft had been circulated at the Pentagon. But the final report has yet to appear. "It'll be out when it's completely done," Skinner says.



Blind Justice: Detainees in Tikrit, May 2003

THE TORTURE STORY, ESPECIALLY concerning Abu Ghraib, seems to be in its wind-down phase. But experts warn that there

are more chapters to come. "With detainee abuses, the story is less than halfway through its life," says Scott Horton, former chairman of the Committee on International Human Rights of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York. One issue, he says, is "the operation of a gulag of detention facilities around the world."

Mohamed is a member of a potential class-action lawsuit filed by Susan Burke, Shereef Akeel, and attorneys from the Center for Constitutional Rights against private contractors Titan Corporation and CACI International Inc. for abuses their employees allegedly committed in Iraq. Spokesmen for both companies have vehemently denied the charges.

Mohamed returned home from captivity to find a black banner in front of his house, symbolizing the death of his father, 70-year-old Shihab Ahmed, in the raid. An autopsy, according to Mohamed, listed the cause of death as "gunshot wounds," including three fired at short range to the back of his head. Later that week, an American colonel arrived at Mohamed's house.

"He filled the entire street with Hummers," says Mohamed. "He got out of the car and he said, 'We're sorry. We got some false information.' My relatives said, 'Show him what they did.' I lifted up my pant leg, and my leg was completely blue. I think the colonel was affected by what he saw." **TAP**

An Ocean Apart

The United States and Europe have vital shared interests, but is the Bush administration serious about finding common ground?

BY ANDREW MORAVCSIK

HISTORY WILL SURELY JUDGE US NOT BY OUR old disagreements but by our new achievements," Condoleezza Rice told a Paris audience on February 8, speaking on her first European trip as secretary of state. If the Bush administration is truly interested in a trans-Atlantic rapprochement, it is not a moment too soon. U.S.-European relations are more acrimonious than they have been in decades. The broad European opposition to the Bush administration's policies on Iraq, global warming, human rights, arms control, and trade is reciprocated by Washington's disdain for everything from Europe's view of Iran to its proposed new constitution.

American conservatives are angry not just at the failure of much of Europe to support the Iraq War. They are also alarmed by Europe's effort to achieve closer integration through a new European Union constitution and greater coordination of foreign and defense policy, all of which are seen as evidence that Europe is going its own way in world affairs—or worse, following the French recipe of "balancing" the United States.

Yet even a truculently conservative United States and an occasionally self-indulgent Europe share abiding vital interests. Europeans and Americans agree on the need to combat terrorism and nuclear proliferation, the desirability of a two-state solution for Israel-Palestine, the need for humanitarian intervention, support for democratization from the Ukraine to China, multilateral maintenance of a liberal world economy, debt relief for developing countries, and the expansion of the EU to include Turkey, to name just a few. The areas of disagreement, such as the Kyoto accords and the International Criminal Court, are far from trivial, but the core common interests are far more extensive.

Indeed, the recent Iraq War is quite unrepresentative of deeper trends in trans-Atlantic relations. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, Western powers have intervened repeatedly outside the NATO homeland—the Gulf War, Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, the Ivory Coast, and Afghanistan—and every one of those interventions was, at least in the end, strongly supported by both the United States and Europe. European nations now deploy more than 100,000 troops abroad, most of

them in defense of U.S. commitments. Twenty years ago, the possibility that European troops would be stationed in Afghanistan to back a U.S. intervention would have been treated as an absurd fantasy. This unheralded revolution in European policy demonstrates substantial Western consensus even on the use of force, contrary to Robert Kagan's oversimplified distinction between America as "Mars" and Europe as "Venus."

DESPITE ABIDING COMMON TRANS-ATLANTIC INTERESTS, however, many in and close to the Bush administration consider a united Europe at best an irrelevance and at worst a fundamental threat to U.S. interests. The disappearance of the Soviet threat in Europe and the increase in U.S. defense to nearly 50 percent of world military expenditures mean that the United States finds itself less dependent on its allies for conducting classic military missions than at any time in the past half-century.

Some American conservatives even favor an all-out diplomatic attack on the EU. They fear that France and Germany, having revealed fundamental opposition to the United States in the Iraq crisis, seek to exploit the new EU constitution to neutralize America's ostensible allies in Europe, such as Britain, Spain, Italy, and Poland. David Frum, George W. Bush's former speechwriter, believes that the German campaign for a United Nations seat—a quixotic, but benign, ambition—shows the EU desperately split between large and small states. The United States, Frum urges, should side with smaller European democracies against France and Germany, reassuring those "without a Security Council seat that their interests will be championed."

Jeffrey Cimbalo, a private lawyer writing in a recent issue of *Foreign Affairs*, advises the United States to "end its uncritical support of European integration." As in the Iraq War, the United States should aim to "divide and conquer" Europe by forcing a stark choice between the EU and NATO. The United States, Cimbalo contends, should publicly encourage populations in the United Kingdom, Poland, and Denmark to reject the new European constitution pending renegotiation of its security clauses to permit a permanent "opt out." Once that is in place, the United States should eject any participants in the EU arrangements

from NATO, or seek “bilateral or multilateral strategic arrangements ... to replicate NATO’s core of close supporters.”

THIS SORT OF TALK IS DANGEROUSLY MISGUIDED AND misinformed. First, there is nothing radically new about the proposed EU constitution. The (oft-amended) Treaty of Rome has functioned as a de facto EU constitution for decades, and the new constitution would only modestly change the formal status of EU cooperation. Second, EU military cooperation, like that of NATO, would continue to function on the basis of “coalitions of the willing.” The proposed EU common defense policy does not prevent member governments from acting alone or opting out of any joint action. Moreover, undermining the EU would not thereby strengthen NATO—an organization that has been pushed into irrelevance by, above all, U.S. policy. The Bush administration initially resisted NATO involvement in Kosovo, sought to refuse the first ever allied invocation of NATO mutual defense provisions in response to September 11, remains ambivalent about NATO involvement in Afghanistan, and has done little over the past four years to reform or strengthen the organization.

We have seen that in almost every military action between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the election of George W. Bush—and currently in Afghanistan—Europeans have been our most steadfast military allies. And whereas most European governments are skeptical of U.S. actions in Iraq, they do not support the French rhetorical goal of balancing the United States. It is unclear that even the French actually seek this.

As a practical matter, a conservative effort to isolate the EU would backfire, boosting politicians like French President Jacques Chirac while undermining U.S. allies like Tony Blair in Britain. By siding with the United States on Iraq, Blair paid an enormous price in terms of public support and diplomatic credibility and gained little in return. Shortly after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Britain’s UN ambassador, Jeremy Greenstock, responded to a public question about the failure of Blair’s efforts to influence Bush in the run-up to Iraq by supporting U.S. policy with one sentence: “We shall never do this again.” Another U.S. “war of choice” in the Middle East would probably gain no support from any European country.

The obsessive focus of conservative U.S. analysts on the EU’s nascent defense policy, rather than on its powerful and useful civilian and peacekeeping capabilities, tells us more about the narrowness of U.S. strategic thinking than about the real intentions or capabilities of a united Europe. If Americans and Europeans have learned any common lesson from the war in Iraq, it is that “it is harder to win the peace than to win the war.” And with regard to each of the key policy instruments essential for crisis prevention and postwar reconstruction—trade, aid, peacekeeping, monitoring, multilateral legitimation, leading by exam-

ple—the Europeans are more capable than the United States.

In reality, European defense cooperation is not aimed at balancing the U.S. hegemony but at mustering troops for humanitarian and peacekeeping operations. Current and prospective EU members contribute 10 times as many soldiers to UN peacekeeping and policing operations as does the United States. In trouble spots around the globe, European nations take the lead, as did the United Kingdom in Sierra Leone, France in the Ivory Coast, Italy in Albania, and Germany in Afghanistan. Eighty-four percent of the peacekeepers in Kosovo and more than half of those in Afghanistan are non-American.



Condi in Paris: The beginning of a thaw?

IN THAT SENSE, THE POST-COLD WAR WORLD IS BIPOLAR after all. The European Union is the quiet superpower. Consider the following elements:

Enlargement. Arguably the single most powerful Western policy instrument for conflict prevention is admission to, or association with, the EU. In 20 years, the EU will likely stretch from the Arctic Circle to the Turkish border of Iraq. In country after country, authoritarian, ethnically intolerant, or corrupt governments have lost elections to democratic, market-oriented coalitions held together by the promise of EU membership. EU member states have recently made a courageous decision to move forward in negotiating the accession of Turkey, a long-term U.S. goal.

Trade. For those who cannot join the EU, economic association remains an option. Association agreements already encompass Russia, much of the rest of the former Soviet Union, Israel, and many Arab states in the Middle East and North Africa—all of which trade more with Europe than with the United States. Any serious Western effort at resolving the Israeli-Palestinian problem, reaching a settlement with Iran, or reforming governments in the Middle East requires trade concessions.

Aid. Foreign assistance—whether in the form of humanitarian aid, technical expertise, or support for nation building—reduces immediate human suffering and bolsters peaceful development. Here, too, Europe is the civilian superpower, dispensing 70 percent of global foreign aid and spreading its largesse far more widely than the United States. This includes aid for democracy building in the Middle East, where—excepting Iraq—the EU dispenses 15 times more aid than the United States.

Monitoring. Multilateral oversight of disarmament and human rights by an international organization is generally more effective and legitimate than a unilateral effort. Multilateral measures are also less sensitive politically, for the monitored party has less reason to suspect the inspectors' motives. There is now a considerable agreement that the UN inspection regime was quite effective, rendering the Iraq War unnecessary. Although neither UN inspections nor U.S. coercive diplomacy work very well alone, they can be extremely effective as complementary elements of a "good cop, bad cop" routine. Europe has extensive regional experience at conditioning aid on monitor-

interest, and the United States would thus do well to acknowledge and encourage united European efforts to develop them.

The optimal trans-Atlantic relationship would thus be one in which the United States and Europe exploit their respective comparative advantages, each doing what it does best. In some areas, this strategy of complementarity may not require much explicit cooperation; the EU, for example, can admit Turkey and the United States can defend Korea without much assistance from the other. Yet, as the war in Iraq and pressure on Iran demonstrate, the number of areas where smooth parallel policy options exist is decreasing. Policy goals such as nuclear nonproliferation in Iran, debt relief in Africa, an Arab-Israeli settlement, and an arms-sales policy consistent with the containment of China are far better pursued with prior Western cooperation.

The death of Yasir Arafat has created new opportunities to push the Middle East peace process forward. Though American presidents sometimes find it difficult to pressure Israel, and European governments sometimes find it difficult to coordinate at all, a joint U.S. and European strategy is surely preferable to isolated action. The future of a broader Middle East peace settlement rests on the success of the transition to a well-functioning Palestinian Authority in Gaza, and, later, on a combination of military and economic incentives that only the West as a whole can provide. If Europeans truly support a settlement, and if President Bush truly aims to make good on his pledge to forge a new Middle

In nonmilitary areas of foreign policy, such as peacekeeping, trade, foreign aid, and monitoring of agreements, Europe is already a superpower.

ing and is the major supporter of multilateral institutions with serious inspection capability.

Multilateral Legitimacy. In assembling international legitimacy—the persuasive influence that Joseph Nye terms "soft power"—for confrontations with rogue states, European involvement is crucial. In 1991, President George Bush Senior was initially disinclined to move against Iraq through the UN, but he was advised that European countries would not back his efforts without a Security Council resolution. The result of his administration's careful diplomacy was near-unanimous Western support for the Gulf War, the unlocking of more than \$50 billion in co-financing, and near-universal logistical cooperation from neighboring countries. Compare this with the recent Iraq War, which failed to secure the support of even longtime U.S. allies like Turkey, largely because of the clear lack of multilateral legitimacy.

IN ALL THESE RESPECTS—PEACEKEEPING, TRADE, AID, MONITORING, multilateralism, and the use of nonmilitary instruments of policy—Europe is already a superpower equal to or stronger than the United States. For institutional and ideological reasons—from supermajoritarian ratification rules for treaties and conservative opposition to foreign aid to the lack of a social democratic tradition—the United States seems quite incapable of matching European achievements in sustaining regional integration, trade concessions, foreign aid, peacekeeping, multilateral participation, and monitoring. But encouraging greater Western capabilities in these areas is very much in America's in-

East (something that would surely involve a modicum of sophisticated pressure on Ariel Sharon's Israel), they cannot ignore this vital trouble spot. Generous European aid has been an essential element in previous efforts at Middle East peace settlements, and it must become so again.

Unfortunately, as with policy toward the new EU constitution, neoconservative resistance to collaboration with Europe often stands in the way of opportunities for collaboration. Take the case of Iran. The military options for preventing a nuclear Iran by force are risky and probably futile, as the Iranians have hidden most of the critical materials. Any strike would also likely lead to a nationalist wave that could only strengthen the current Iranian regime. An invasion to change the regime, even if the United States did not have 120,000 troops held hostage in Iraq, would be beyond our means. In January, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, backed by a 200-page dossier, declared that his government, like those of France and Germany, does not believe there is a useful military option in Iran. If the United States were to precipitately invade Iran, it would have no major European allies.

Over the past year, the British, French, and German governments have crafted a joint initiative to create a peaceful alternative. They have offered Tehran diplomatic and economic incentives to forgo nuclear weapons and place its program under multilateral supervision, while threatening further sanctions if it does not. (The informal and tripartite nature of this initiative is further evidence of both the strength of the post-Iraq European consensus and the essential irrelevance of legalistic commitments.) We do not know how likely the

European effort is to succeed, but the British, French, and Germans believe it can't succeed without American support. It would seem prudent for the United States to fully explore the possibility of offering Tehran a security pledge and economic benefits in exchange for forgoing nuclear weapons, much like the deal John F. Kennedy offered Cuba.

Yet conservatives inside and outside the administration have publicly criticized Europe's Iran initiative as naive. In her confirmation hearings and even in interviews abroad, Secretary of State Rice pointedly refused to rule out a military strike. The administration is reported to be split on the advisability of an attack, with most top officials retaining it as a live option. A repeat of Iraq may well be in the offing, right down to widespread but unsupported claims in conservative circles that Iran is teetering on the brink of a reformist revolution—a claim for which little reputable evidence exists.

IF THERE IS ANY HOPE FOR TRANS-atlantic cooperation under a second Bush administration, it probably lies in lower-profile efforts to craft pragmatic solutions to specific problems, while keeping any initiatives below the public rhetoric of presidential speeches (whether by Chirac or Bush) and congressional electioneering. Some examples are:

Intelligence Cooperation. A model for such a strategy is ongoing intelligence cooperation; the United States works very closely with European governments to share intelligence. Of particular value is intelligence from France—which still possesses, unlike the United States, a human intelligence network inherited from colonial times. French information has foiled a number of major terrorist attacks on U.S. citizens at home and abroad.

Strategic Export Controls. The Europeans will soon lift their post-Tiananmen arms export embargo on China. This is a symbolic act desired by the Chinese to acknowledge the current leadership's greater openness and desired by the Europeans largely for economic reasons. The incentives to electioneer are almost irresistible. Congressional Republicans have issued a statement insisting that this issue is a "test" of whether Europeans are fit to be allies, and hinting darkly at sanctions and a reassessment of U.S. strategic commitments. This issue is poised to become a major trans-Atlantic row. Yet it is unnecessary. The truth is that—below the level of symbolic politics—the Europeans are proposing to replace the current export control system with a stronger, more transparent, and more detailed system. The smart U.S. strategy (not least because the Europeans, with strong support from "new Europeans" like Italy, Spain, and Britain, will move forward anyway) would be for mid-level officials to work quietly with Europeans to strengthen that list—a policy recommended by our British allies. Yet such a pragmatic view remains at best controversial

within the administration for essentially ideological and bureaucratic reasons.

Killer Containers. The lifeblood of the world economy flows through shipping containers. Yet of the containers that enter Western ports, only a small percentage are inspected. A centralized tracking system with information on the origins and contents of all containers could be had for just a few dollars a container. The existence of more detailed data, and a level playing field in enforcing data provision rules, would benefit business as well by improving the efficiency of trade, while also dampening smuggling of goods and narcotics. If Federal Express knows where your packages are and where they came from, shouldn't homeland-security agents as well?

"Loose Nukes." Forty countries possess nuclear materials that could be fashioned into either an atomic or "dirty" (radioactive) bomb, much of which remains vulnerable to theft or purchase by terrorists or is held by governments whose motives are in doubt. A robust multilateral nonproliferation regime could be designed to shut down the production, theft, sale, and transfer of nuclear technology, knowledge, and materials, with particular focus on countries such as the former Soviet Union and North Korea. The key to success is providing those nations with financial subsidies and trade preferences—from the United States as well as Europe—and securing compliance from private-sector suppliers.

All these policies have the advantages

of keeping a low profile and avoiding the sort of heated ideological debates that weigh down the Western alliance. They could be implemented informally, rather than raising sensitive public issues of multilateralism and sovereignty. At the same time, they would indubitably help to reinforce a common understanding of vital interests on both sides of the Atlantic. The Bush administration would get concrete action in the war on terrorism. The Europeans would be able to act through largely diplomatic and civilian means. Moreover, most appeal to broader elite constituencies, including international business, ethnic groups, and nongovernmental organizations. Taken together, the existence of such opportunities would demonstrate that U.S. and European interests are largely convergent and that their policy instruments—a military superpower America and a civilian superpower Europe—are ultimately complementary. Therein lies the last best hope for the West. **TAP**

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Found in Translation: Euro skeptics say Bush is no JFK.

Pulpit Bullies

You might think the doings in one small-town mosque don't amount to much. You would be very wrong.

BY ASRA Q. NOMANI

"And we have raised, from among them, leaders ..."
— Koran, *al-Sajdah*, "The Prostration," 32:24

JUST BEFORE MIDNIGHT ONE FRIDAY LAST DECEMBER, an Egyptian American professor of electrical engineering at West Virginia University, clad in a track suit and red-and-white checkered scarf, stepped through the green steel doors of our mosque in Morgantown, West Virginia. With a spring in his step, he took a breath of the cool night air and smiled widely as he triumphantly waved to a Muslim man by the door. Down the street, in front of the Friendship Motel, a crew for a PBS documentary quietly rolled its cameras on the gesture.

There was much for the professor to celebrate. In a year's time, he and a posse of extremist Muslims had successfully launched a takeover of our newly built mosque, driven moderate Muslims out of power, trash-talked women out of office, and entrenched the posse's members as leaders. Its latest win: a landslide victory that night in the mosque election.

Speaking in Urdu, the language of South-Asian Muslims, local Muslims who opposed the posse had taken to calling its members *chumcha*, or "spoons," a cultural concept akin to being a lackey. For an American Muslim like me, born in India but raised in Morgantown, the shorthand was obvious: chumps. And the Chump Gang represented something much more than small-town politics.

The problems in the Morgantown Muslim community are symbolic of the crisis in leadership facing the American Muslim world. They underscore the challenges that the emerging progressive Muslim community faces in trying to create a new reality of inclusion, tolerance, and balance. While seemingly far removed from the issues of corruption and intimidation that define the political process from Iraq to Afghanistan, the problems facing the American Muslim community, sitting in the bastion of democracy, are driven by some of the same impulses. Questions about democracy in Islam are not restricted to faraway lands but also echo in Muslim communities in America. The anatomy of a mosque in Morgantown also reflects the peculiar challenges America faces with some Muslims who wear the laurels of suc-

cess in the United States. The professor has led National Science Foundation (NSF) dental forensic research as a close collaborator with the FBI, and he has done NASA computer-security research—while railing against America from the pulpit.

In an effort not to lose conservative Muslim donors who fund the building of mosques, traditional leaders in the American Muslim community are ignoring constituencies that are banging at the door for entry. They are ignoring women, young people, and moderate men who eschew interpretations of Islam that are bigoted, sexist, and intolerant. "American Muslim leaders act as if they are playing a game of Monopoly, buying and collecting property, instead of leading the community with vision," says Khalid Abou El Fadl, an Islamic scholar and professor at the UCLA School of Law.

After more than a year of immersion in the local and national American Muslim community, and a lifetime growing up in both, I've come to see that a revolution—not an evolution—of values must occur in order to fix a system that is betraying the best interests of not only the majority of Muslims but of the world. The civil-rights leaders of the 1960s were fighting intimidation, corruption, and distortions in theology. While moderate Muslims for the most part do not face direct threats of violence in the way civil rights leaders did, we still face similar challenges (I have received one death threat, a posting on an Internet bulletin board with the subject heading, "Death to Asra," which I traced to a university student and referred to the FBI). Ultimately, moderate Muslims have only ourselves to blame if we don't become the leaders we want to see in the world. If new, moderate leadership doesn't persevere, we will see growing Muslim fundamentalism in America. The neoconservatives have recognized this, but their frightening solutions thwart progressive Muslims and empower extremists who argue that Westerners are intent on destroying Islam. Indeed, American liberal values are so in sync with spiritual Islam's values of social justice, economic equity, and gender equality that it's incumbent upon American liberals to recognize the struggle here at home by progressive Muslims—and have a stake in supporting it. "Islam in America is in the early stages of organizing a grass-roots movement similar to the reform movements that have defined other faith traditions," says Ahmed Nassef, editor of *Muslim WakeUp!*, a popular progressive Mus-

lim e-magazine. "Moderate and liberal Muslims share the same values as American liberals, and they are in a position to help ... develop a distinct and effective national security strategy."

LIKE SO MANY MODERATE MUSLIMS, I WAS A DISENGAGED spectator of my Muslim community for most of my life. I never felt as if I belonged. It was easier for me to practice my faith in my private space and pursue my dreams in the secular world. As a senior at Morgantown High School, I was a normal American teen: breaking into journalism as editor of our high-school newspaper, the *Red and Blue Journal*; lettering in volleyball and track as a Morgantown High Mohigan.

Starting in 1988, I was based in Chicago, Washington, D.C., and then New York, writing about corporate America, politics, and popular culture as a staff reporter for *The Wall Street Journal*. I saw fundamentalism emerging in the Muslim community, both in Morgantown and nationally, but I never challenged it. I just avoided it. Like a lot of people, I experienced September 11 as a dramatic wake-up call. On book leave, I flew to Pakistan to report on the war in Afghanistan for *Salon*. In Karachi, I rented a sun-drenched villa to finish writing my first book. On assignment in Islamabad, my dear friend and *Journal* colleague Daniel Pearl jetted into town with his wife, Mariane, to visit me. With Mariane, I waved goodbye to Danny as he slipped away in a yellow taxi for a scheduled interview with a Muslim sheikh. It was the last time that either of us saw him.

Unknown to us, a young London School of Economics dropout and Muslim radical had laid a careful kidnapping trap for Danny. In the desperate hope that Danny had his cell phone, Mariane and I tapped a text message from mine, three simple words capturing the philosophy my parents had taught me as a Muslim to embrace for friends of all faiths: "We love you." Five weeks later, after a desperate search that Mariane and I spearheaded out of the dining room in my house, counterterrorism specialists discovered the videotape that confirmed Danny's fate.

I returned to Morgantown, not only reeling from the shock of my friend's murder but also carrying a baby conceived in Karachi before Danny was kidnapped. My Muslim boyfriend, for fear of getting involved, had abandoned Mariane and me as soon as Danny had disappeared. I had my baby boy in October 2002, and for a year I struggled with questions about my faith, even taking my son with me to Mecca. I was trying to discover whether there was a place for a person like me in my religion. The pilgrimage became my introduction to beautiful Muslims who practice the compassion, love, and kindness of spiritual Islam, not the division, hatred, and ugliness of political Islam. Over the year, I found a spiritual community of like-minded Muslims who buoyed my faith in my religion.

I marked Shibli's first birthday in October 2003 with a naming ceremony that symbolizes a baby's birth as a Muslim. I had chosen to raise him in the religion of my ancestors. Days later, my father, a founder of the first mosque in Morgantown in 1981, told me that he and other men had successfully completed construction of a new mosque that would be opened for the holy month of Ramadan. Danny's murder told me that, as moderate Muslims, we had a critical role to play in how Islam was expressed in the world. I was ready to accept my responsibilities.

When I first stepped up to the green doors of our mosque

for its grand opening on the eve of Ramadan, I had no clue about the drama that was to unfold, and the struggle for the soul of Islam hanging in the balance. I was just a mother excited about taking her son to the mosque. But at the front door, the loud voice of the mosque board chairman splintered my joy. "Sister! Take the back entrance!" yelled the Egyptian American man, an educated fellow with a Ph.D. who was a longtime resident of the United States. I stared at him, stunned, and proceeded through the front door. I turned quickly to the left and didn't dare go up the front staircase. Unknown to me, it led to a main hall, but somehow I knew it was forbidden.

For 10 seething days, I kept returning to an isolated balcony where other women and I sat staring at a hip-high solid wall, barely able to follow the voice of the disembodied preacher below. When a woman wanted the microphone so that a convert could recite her proclamation of faith aloud to the congregation, the mosque manager, a staff employee at the university, refused to hand it over, declaring, "A woman's voice is not to be heard in the mosque." Nobody protested. No leader emerged. When the Muslim Students' Association distributed a collection of books including a Saudi-published primer, *Women in the Shade of Islam*, with a section called "Women Beating," instructing men how to beat their wives and identifying the types of women who "enjoy being beaten," nobody protested. No leader emerged.

For my part, I couldn't accept the third-class status of the balcony. On the 11th day of Ramadan, in November 2003, I woke in the pre-dawn to step through the front door with my mother and family and climb into the main hall. We settled into place, accepting second-class status about 30 feet behind the men, to appease their fears. Then, the board president towered over us and yelled at us to leave: "Sister! It's better for you upstairs." I knew my rights. Women didn't have to pray behind any partition in the prophet Muhammad's mosque in Medina in the 7th century, and I had prayed beside men in Mecca. At that moment, though, and later that evening when I returned to the mosque and prayed behind about a hundred men, nobody defended me from the band of men who surrounded me to try to intimidate me out of the main hall. The rest of the men watched passively. No leader emerged.

Instead, the mosque board turned around the next day and voted 4 to 1 to reserve the front door and main hall solely for the use of men. My father, a board member, was the lone dissenting vote. They didn't open a dialogue with me. The board president jetted out of town to his native Egypt for a six-month stay. The acting board president refused my entreaties for a meeting. They ruled by edict. I filed the first complaint of gender discrimination with the Council on American-Islamic Relations, a Washington-based Muslim group dedicated to defending Muslim civil rights. Its officials told me that this intra-Muslim issue fell out of its jurisdiction. Except for my father, I could not find support for my rights. Instead, when I tried to attend a study session one evening, a board member, a local cardiologist, threatened me with a restraining order. Another man, a research-assistant professor, verbally assaulted my father and me. His boss at the university: the professor who was to later tighten his grip on the mosque. The mosque board member blamed me for causing the problem. Nobody protested. No leader emerged.

MY SITUATION IS NOT UNIQUE. AND WHILE ONE SMALL mosque in one small town may not sound that important, what's going on in Morgantown is all too representative of a national trend of extremist belligerence and moderate passivity in mosques across America.

This past November, the imam of a Boston mosque banned a young woman, Nakia Jackson, when she dared to leave the smelly room designated for women and pray in the main hall. Not long after, men in a Charlotte, North Carolina, mosque locked women out of the main hall when they received an edict from like-minded men in a Chicago organization, ruling that women must be separated from men in the mosque. It's true that most American Muslims don't even attend mosques on a regular basis—as many as 75 percent, according to experts. But it's the 25 percent who do that matter, because that 25 percent is defined by men like the professor—educated men in respected professions who get along with the neighbors from Saturday to Thursday but say things from the pulpit on Fridays that cast those neighbors as enemies of God. In a 2000 survey by national Muslim organizations, 67 percent of mosque leaders said they somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement that “America is an immoral, corrupt society.”

In our mosque, a board of trustees and a management committee called “the executive committee” is supposed to run the mosque, according to a constitution my father helped write. The board is handpicked. The executive committee is supposed to be elected every November. Because of infighting, the last executive committee disbanded the year before the new mosque opened. When my father tried to raise the question of running another election, other board members voted him down. They would rather live with the vacuum of elected leaders than the nuisance. But most came to the mosque only once a week for the Friday service, akin to a church's Sunday service. Many matters went unattended. Most of the congregation didn't notice, but the vacuum was noticed by a band of men who attended the mosque regularly for the five daily prayers that are a part of Muslim ritual. Piety doesn't make for extremism, but the five daily prayers serve as a convenient meeting time for Muslims inclined to narrow interpretations of the religion.

On March 1, 2004, the professor and his followers posted a memo on the wall of the main hall. They had named themselves the “temporary executive committee.” The man spearheading the coup: the professor, who was named president. No elections. No community meeting. No board approval. They took to the microphone to announce their band of brothers. They added a note of intimidation: They deserved to be the leaders of the mosque because they prayed there the most. Two board members, moderate Muslims, sat in the congregation. No leader emerged. I tried to ask them about their legitimacy. The “maintenance director” of the coup snapped at me. “Go organize the sisters,” he said.

For two and a half months, the men held weekly Sunday meetings in the community room of the mosque with a rule typed into their agenda: “Sisters must sit in a designated space in the back.” They took passionately to the task of running the mosque with new

bulletin boards, mailboxes, and locks among their agenda items. My father boldly stood at the pulpit and read a statement: “The board of trustees does not recognize any executive committee that is not elected.” That night, the acting president, a Pakistani man who seemed like a moderate Muslim psychiatrist, yelled at my father. He didn't want to start a fight with the takeover group. He didn't want to involve the police. Shouting, the psychiatrist threatened to take action against my father to strip him of his post.

My father's response: “Go ahead.”

The psychiatrist backed off the threat, but there would be no challenge of the takeover group. My father quit his position in protest. He was an elderly man; he didn't have the energy to fight the corruption of power. With my mother, I went Sunday after Sunday to the group's meetings, sitting at a table facing the members' tables, arranged horseshoe-style. I challenged their legitimacy to change the locks on the mosque door. They reprimanded me. No leader emerged.

The Saudi student who had preached the hate sermon introduced a motion: Vote on our names separately. They rejected me. They accepted her.

At the pulpit one week, a Saudi student derided man-made law as the work of “enemies of Islam” and called on the congregation to “contemporary enemies of the Prophet” and told the congregation, “Among the most important indicators of one's sincere love of the Prophet is to hate those who hate him.” This was the Wahhabist interpretation of Islam. As a congregation, we were expected to sit silently. “Like sheep,” I whispered to my mother, sitting beside me, during one offensive sermon.

I went to that Sunday's meeting to protest the sermons. A woman convert sat beside me, an ally in my effort to open the doors of our mosque. She and I had joined forces to run for office in an election the board was finally holding. The men of the takeover were voting on their own slate. In the bat of an eye, they voted on whether to include the convert and me. They voted no. I wouldn't have accepted anyway. Then, the Saudi student who had preached the hate sermon introduced a motion: Vote on our names separately. They rejected me. They accepted her. She accepted their nomination. My mother sat beside us, stunned. The convert's rationalization: She wanted to try to work from within. The meeting broke for prayer. The men assembled into lines, standing shoulder to shoulder. My mother and I stood in our usual spot toward the rear of the main hall. The convert wouldn't join us.

Two weeks later, the professor stood at the pulpit, coming from his job doing critical research for the NSF, the FBI, and NASA. He slammed the West: “What a dark path theirs is.”

MUSLIM EXTREMISTS ENGAGE IN A CALCULATED STRATEGY to discredit moderate leaders and sabotage their efforts. Sadly, progressives allow the extremists to institute this strategy. With my one ally gone, I withdrew from the race. The

convert dutifully created campaign fliers for her newly adopted slate, the “temporary executive committee” (which is like a junta declaring itself “the temporary parliament” in a parliamentary election). The “maintenance director” stared at the flier with mug shots of the nine-member slate, including his own, and spoke everyone’s mind. “Looks like a ‘Most Wanted’ poster,” he said.

The day of the election, the members of the coup smiled widely and passed out sweets, a symbol of a victory of which they were so certain that they didn’t wait until after the results to distribute them. I surveyed the scene and, for the first time, understood why reform candidates in Iran had boycotted their national election months earlier: conscience. To vote in a flawed election process is to accept corruption.

I filed a protest with the acting board president. It went unanswered. That night the results went up on the wall of the mosque: Seven of the takeover group’s slate had won office, including the professor and the American convert. In addition, two American-raised men, for the most part progressive, won office. Of the nine newly elected members, four, including the professor, were radical conservative; two were conservative moderate; three were progressive moderate. The extremists hadn’t won all the seats, but the coup was successful enough. And it had won lead-

that Jews and Christians have strayed from “the straight path.” Most often, I protested alone against the intolerant sermons coming from the pulpit just about every month. This time, fortunately, so, too, did others. The elected committee had an emergency meeting and did the right thing: It fired the student from his post as a voluntary imam. Missing from the meeting was the professor; he was still in Egypt.

That weekend, the student wrote his defense to the congregation and provided a startling revelation: He had gotten the sermon from a Web site called *al-Minbar* (“the Pulpit”). At my desk at home I plugged the site’s name into my Web browser. What I found stunned me. The site was a slick one that disseminated prefab speeches of hate written by Wahhabist clerics in Saudi Arabia. It was the source of at least three other sermons preached from our pulpit by the Chump Gang.

I usually protested alone against the intolerant sermons coming from the pulpit just about every month. This time, fortunately, so, too, did others.

ership: The professor who led the coup became the elected president. The question was whether the moderates could stand up to the extremists. “It’s a jump ball,” I told my mother.

It wasn’t for long, though. Shortly thereafter, I asked the executive committee to announce a literary reading by American Muslim women writers who were jetting into Morgantown to march in support of women’s rights at mosques. After much struggle and debate, the imam agreed to announce the event. But some felt that I had shamed the community by publicly standing up against gender discrimination. A petition was drawn up to have me banned. Thirty-five members of the mosque supposedly signed it. I got word of it when the president—the professor—sent me a missive, calling me to a 9:15 p.m. meeting to draw names out of a plastic bag for my jury. I sought the names of my accusers. Denied. I sought the charges against me. Denied. I sought legal representation. Denied. The professor barreled the petition through the process. No leader emerged. And the professor got on a jet plane for a visit to his native Egypt.

Then, on the last Friday of July 2004, a dramatic moment occurred. An Egyptian doctoral student of the professor’s stood at the pulpit in a robe and head covering. “One of the most important fundamentals of our religion,” he said, “is to love and be loyal to Islam and the Muslims and to hate and renounce the disbelievers.” He had twisted the first chapter of the Koran, adopting a translation commonly used by Wahhabist clerics, to proclaim

WE ARE IN DESPERATE NEED OF MUSLIM LEADERS WHO will galvanize and energize moderates to build communities that are inclusive, tolerant, and compassionate, with social values that are as progressive as Islam itself, and who would not let radicalism define our communities. Many are trying. At the Islamic Center of Long Island, board President

Faroque Khan and other leaders—both women and men—inspire their community to sponsor interfaith events, promote women’s involvement, and encourage activities for American Muslim youth. In Chicago, pediatrician Jihad Shoshara and others have organized a progressive Muslim group that meets monthly. In Plainfield, Indiana, Louay Safi, former director of the

Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy, took the helm of the Leadership Development Center for the Islamic Society of North America, the largest Muslim organization in North America. Our mosque fell under its umbrella as an affiliate, getting nonprofit status through the association. Safi believes in the same ideals as I do: inclusion and tolerance. At a mosque in Salt Lake City, Utah, he reprimanded mosque leaders for demanding that women sit in a balcony, only their blurry silhouettes visible behind a wall of glass blocks. Earlier in the year, I had sought help from him for the debacle that was leadership in our local community. He mediated to make certain the election was held, but when the issue of the hate sermon emerged, he told me that his organization preferred that such issues be settled locally.

Over the summer, another female convert had joined the mosque’s leadership as one of its activity coordinators. Her first project had been simple: a forum with the title “The Place of Women in the Masjid and the Community.” She worked closely with Safi to coordinate the event. Like the other convert, she repeatedly got brushed aside locally, despite the approval of the mosque leadership for the event. Finally, she quit in frustration. In October 2004, Safi arrived alone, and his visit exemplified the challenges facing the Muslim world. At a Friday-night community meeting, my mother, the convert, and I sat to one side of the spacious hall. The meeting seemed to be going as well as could be expected. From a report Safi had written called “Future

Directions,” I read from the section about “reforming Muslim practices and speaking against deformed, corrupt, and excessive actions within the Muslim community.”

American Muslims must not be complacent and remain silent when fellow Muslims violate Islamic values or are implicated in actions that distort the humane and noble principles of Islam. Religious solidarity must not be allowed to trump our moral and legal commitments. Justice and good judgment rather than sympathy must guide Muslim positions and actions.

Safi nodded his head in agreement. But in a moment, we were all to realize just how much of a challenge that represented. The convert slipped forward to listen better, and the research-assistant professor who had led a tirade against my father and me exploded. “How can you let a woman sit in the front?” he demanded. When Safi tried to respond, the research assistant snapped back: “Shut your mouth. I don’t like the sound of your voice.” When Safi asked him on whose behalf he was speaking, his answer was quick: the professor—his boss and the man who had led the takeover.

The problems were clear to Safi in his three days there: sharply divided constituencies without leadership guiding them to coexistence. He offered six solid recommendations for improvement, including conflict-resolution training, adherence to the democratic process, and leadership training. The report was sent to all of the members of the executive committee. To this date, Safi hasn’t received any follow-up on his recommendations. No leader emerged.

JUST RECENTLY, THE CONSERVATIVES HAVE ALLOWED SOME of the moderate men who lost in the election to preach from the pulpit. One of them told us that Islam mandates that Muslims live with wisdom in “an atmosphere of kindness and gentleness.” He ended with an inspiring prayer: “O, Allah, you alone can help us to transform suspicion, jealousy, and hatred to admiration and affection. We pray that you will give us the wisdom and courage to improve our character ...” Another, communicating a barely veiled message, extolled the congregation to remember that Islam allows for differences among people. Speaking softly, he said, “Work for the good of humanity.”

I hope these gestures bear more fruit. But whatever the posture of the conservatives, it’s incumbent upon progressive and moderate Muslims to organize to create a new reality. That is, after all, the model of the prophet Muhammad when he moved to Medina to create a new Muslim political state and to escape the persecution in Mecca, where most of the residents didn’t accept his message of monotheism and social justice. He took with him companions who believed in him; after several years of proselytizing, his followers only numbered in the several dozen.

Organization, as with all movements, is key. My family and I created Morgantown Muslims & Friends; the convert who had tried to work from within joined forces with us after quitting as a mosque leader when the hard-liners, particularly the professor, wouldn’t budge on the professor’s extremist ideas. “You’re brave,” my mother told her.

But our detractors in even the moderate world have regularly undermined our efforts. In New York City, three men, including *Muslim WakeUp*’s Nassef, and one woman announced the

founding of the Progressive Muslim Union of North America, a bold new venture dedicated to Islamic principles of social, economic, and political equity. Immediately, some moderates became fearful and signaled their intention not to participate.

Desperate for inspiration, I drove with my father to a retreat at a monastery in upstate New York on the banks of the Hudson River. Organized by a visionary leader, Imam Feisel Abdul Rauf, and his wife, Daisy Khan, executive director of an American Muslim group called the ASMA (American Sufi Muslim Association) Society, it carried an inspiring name: Muslim Leaders of Tomorrow. In the cavernous main prayer hall, we assembled into teams to answer three questions: As an American Muslim, what are you tired of? What are you worried about? What are you upset about? One answer, expressed many ways, echoed in the hall: the failure of leadership in our American Muslim community to draw the marginalized and alienated into the tent. “We’re tired of immature, confrontational leadership,” said one participant. “Who are the Muslim leaders speaking for?” asked another. Out of that weekend, several dozen leaders emerged. And, in a routine for the retreat, a comedian from Chicago, Azhar Usman, drew laughs with his characterization of the “uncles” who ran our American Muslim community: “Muslim Leaders of Yesterday.”

The challenge to moderates is how to spark reform amid corruption, intimidation, and outmaneuvering by the extremists. We must be the leaders we want to see in the world. We must make room for a host of progressive Muslim leaders so that we can move forward our agenda of social justice, women’s rights, and tolerance. Moderates need to stop ripping one another apart and, instead, encourage one another to succeed. In his report on the future of leadership in the American Muslim world, Safi said, “Developing Muslim leadership is a must at this critical juncture in the growth of Islam in North America, and could literally spell the difference between creating another success story for Islam, America, and the Muslim world, or bringing about a tragic end to developing a vibrant Islamic presence in North America.”

There are many paths to progress, and we must allow one another the room to walk them with grace and respect. For my part, I will start a Muslim Women’s Freedom Tour on March 1 with an Islamic bill of rights for women, from the mosque to the bedroom. I will create 99 precepts for reform in the Muslim world, much as Martin Luther tacked 95 precepts for change on the doors of a church in Wittenberg, Germany—only each of our Muslim world’s precepts will invoke one of the 99 names traditionally accorded to Allah. Among them: compassion, justice, truth, fairness, and love—all concepts that represent a revolution of values because our leaders and communities have strayed so far from them in our Muslim world. The alternative is unacceptable.

The first mosque doors on which I will post the 99 precepts: my mosque in Morgantown. **TAP**

Asra Q. Nomani is former reporter for The Wall Street Journal and the author of Standing Alone in Mecca: An American Woman’s Struggle for the Soul of Islam, which will be published in March. She lives in Morgantown, West Virginia, with her son and family. Follow the Muslim Women’s Freedom Tour at www.asranomani.com.

China as No. 1

Bush wants freedom everywhere. But the world's biggest dictatorship is now one of America's biggest creditors. Guess who has the leverage on whom?

BY CLYDE PRESTOWITZ

IN THE 15TH CENTURY, VENICE WAS ONE OF THE WORLD'S richest cities and ranked among the great powers because its navy controlled the Mediterranean and its merchants controlled the trade in goods, especially spices. Then Portuguese Captain Vasco da Gama arrived in India in 1498. By 1515, the Portuguese controlled the Straits of Hormuz, the Indian Ocean, the Moluccas (or Spice Islands), and the trade with China. The spices, gems, and silks that for centuries had passed from Asia through the Middle East to Venice and then to the rest of Europe were now carried around Africa on Portuguese caravels. The Egyptian sultans had been able to keep the price of pepper for Europe very high by limiting shipments to 210 tons annually. With the Portuguese in the game, the price of pepper in Lisbon dropped swiftly to one-fifth the price in Venice. The Egyptian-Venetian trade was destroyed overnight, and Portugal knocked Venice out of the ranks of the great powers without firing a shot.

That history came to mind during President Bush's recent inaugural address. His assumptions of indefinite American hegemony were quite at odds with what I have been seeing on recent trips to Asia, and especially to China.

In Singapore, high officials describe the recent rise of China as akin to the arrival of a new sun in the solar system. All over Asia, one hears talk of a shift, not in the balance of power but in the "balance of influence." In a poll asking Thais which nation they considered their country's closest ally, the response was 75 percent for China against 9 percent for the United States. In the Philippines, pop stars from China have risen to the top of the ratings. Filipino businessman John Gokongwei says, "China isn't interested in military expansion. It will seek tribute through trade, like it did before the Western powers came to Asia."

During a recent trip to Australia to meet with business, government, academic, and media leaders, I was told repeatedly that America must not ask Australians to choose between the United States and China. Two years before, President Bush traveled Down Under only to be followed within a week by Chinese President Hu Jintao. Whereas Bush stayed only a couple of days, held no press conferences, and got a distinctly cool reception, Hu kissed babies, toured the country, and was treated like a conquering hero.

Go to Newman in Australia's big-sky country. There you can watch as the front-end loaders take big bites out of the 60-foot walls of iron ore in the open strip mines and load the trains that will take the ore on the first leg of its trip to China. Or just drive north of the U.S. border to Alberta, Canada, where provincial officials are deep in negotiations to strike large deals giving China access to Canadian oil reserves previously destined exclusively for the U.S. market. Brazil, South Korea, and even Japan all now export more to China than to the United States. After more than 20 years of rapid growth, the Chinese economy has become the world's second-largest behind the United States in terms of purchasing power parity.

No one wants to alienate a good customer. And China is quite simply becoming everyone's best customer. Well, almost everyone's.

IN CONTRAST TO MANY OTHER COUNTRIES, THE UNITED States has seen its exports to China increase only modestly in recent years while its imports have gone off the chart. Last year China passed Mexico and Japan to become the second-largest exporter to the U.S. market after Canada. Because Canada also buys a lot from U.S. suppliers, however, China now has by far the largest trade surplus (\$150 billion) with the United States that any country has ever had. Behind this statistic lie several powerful new forces.

First, China has become the location of choice for global manufacturing. This is usually attributed to its low wages. Chinese factory workers today earn 50 cents to \$2 an hour and often work long shifts, getting minimal time off for weekends and holidays. But low wages are not the only factor; after all, wages in places like Vietnam, Myanmar, and Africa are even lower. China's workers are not just inexpensive but literate, hard working, already reasonably skilled, and eager—nay, desperate—to be trained. There is also a sizable and growing cadre of university-educated technologists and professionals. For example, China is now graduating 330,000 engineers and scientists annually, as compared with 398,622 for the United States. China has also invested extensively in infrastructure and now has a very workable system of airports, harbors, communications, and roads. Indeed, your mobile phone will work a lot better in China than in the United

States, and you'll get from the airport to downtown in Shanghai a lot faster than in any major U.S. city.

Today, China is already the largest market in the world for steel, mobile phones, cement, aluminum, and electronic components. Within 20 years, it will likely be the largest market in the world for just about everything. If you are a manufacturer, you will pretty much have to succeed in the China market to have a chance of surviving anywhere else. In theory, you can serve the China market by exporting, but there are some good reasons why you might not. Because Chinese labor is inexpensive, production processes that are capital-intensive in the advanced countries can be "dumbed down" and made much less capital-intensive in China. As a manufacturer, you cut both your wage and your investment costs. On top of that, the Chinese government at local, provincial, and national levels will offer substantial investment incentives—such as long tax holidays, capital grants, free land, low utility rates, worker training, and other benefits—to companies willing to put plants and research-and-development facilities in China.

These investment incentives confound free-trade theory. They are, in fact, distortions of the market, and therefore of questionable legitimacy under the rules of the World Trade Organization. This has never been challenged because other countries have investment subsidies, too. (American states offer tax deals to induce companies to invest.) China, however, subsidizes investment strategically to capture new industries at higher levels than anyone else.

BUT WHY IS THE UNITED STATES the outlier when it comes to China trade? Why isn't every nation running a large trade deficit with the Chinese? Commodity suppliers like Australia, Brazil, and Chile, of course, have trade surpluses with China because China needs their materials. But what of Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and the European nations? Their industries are also locating plants in China. But there are mitigating circumstances. A big one is that these countries have maintained a broader, more robust manufacturing base than the United States. One of America's biggest exports to China and the rest of Asia is waste paper. Germany exports high-speed trains, specialty steels, and machine tools. In addition to these, Japan exports loads of electronic components and ships. America long ago gave up making any of this stuff.

A second factor is differing business and government attitudes. Japanese executives, for example, make a point of saying that they "keep the brain work in Japan." Indeed, Canon has publicly stated that it is bringing formerly outsourced work back to Japan in order to keep key technologies proprietary in Japan. Some European companies take a similar attitude. But given the shareholder-as-king basis of U.S. business, this is a very difficult position for U.S. executives to take. Nor are there government policies to maintain U.S. advantage; it is assumed that American genius and free markets will automatically result in U.S. leadership. If the Chinese are foolish enough to

exchange low-priced consumer goods for cheap U.S. paper, let the party continue.

That brings us to the 800-pound gorilla of the story—the dollar. It is, of course, the world's money. As such, it allows Americans to buy things in international markets simply by printing green pictures of presidents and exchanging them for real goods and services. Unlike others who have to make and sell something to earn dollars with which to buy oil or soybeans or whatever, the Americans only have to run the printing presses.

In the short run, the U.S. budget and trade deficits can be financed at unprecedented levels by the foreigners who lend us money. The U.S. trade deficit is exacerbated by the fact that China keeps its currency artificially low to promote exports. But because the United States needs a net inflow from abroad of about \$2 billion every day to keep itself afloat, it doesn't seriously complain. Worse, the U.S. government actually likes a strong dollar, to keep the price of imported goods and the cost of borrowing low. Of course, such a dollar absolutely kills the export and manufacturing industries, but it makes consumers and the government feel very good, so the government doesn't want to do anything that might interrupt the flow of that foreign capital. Besides, to do so

China is a symptom and a cause of America's vulnerability. Our retailers depend on China, our high-tech companies cede important know-how, and our debt depends on Chinese financing.

could throw the U.S. economy into a nasty recession, if not a depression. Obviously, this cannot continue indefinitely.

The second-biggest lender to the United States after Japan is China. Those who think this dependence has no diplomatic consequences are naive. For more than 50 years, American policy was to keep China out of the Korean Peninsula. Today, the U.S. government has outsourced the handling of North Korea to Beijing. When Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao came recently to Washington, American supporters of Taiwan were shocked and disappointed by his warning to the Taiwanese against any deviation from the long-standing "one China" formulation. American trade officials who ask Beijing to offer more protection for U.S. intellectual property, or to revalue its currency, are politely rebuffed.

The United States has lost substantial leverage with China, along with our loss of manufacturing industry and dependence on Chinese loans. China is both symptom and cause of America's dwindling economic leadership. This loss has geopolitical consequences far beyond our relations with Beijing, and it mocks Bush's hegemonic grand design. At this rate, we risk becoming the Venice of the 21st century. **TAP**

Clyde Prestowitz is president of the Economic Strategy Institute and author of the forthcoming 3 Billion New Capitalists.

Neo-Economics

The neoconservatives have measured American power solely by military might. They've left out something important.

BY MICHAEL STEINBERGER

IN LATE JANUARY, AFTER WEEKS OF WAITING FOR A SIGN that the Bush administration would lead a coordinated effort to try to prevent the dollar's recent slide from turning into a full-fledged crash, the world finally seemed to get the message. "There's nobody home on economic policy in America right now," a frustrated Morgan Stanley chief global economist Stephen Roach told an audience at the annual Davos, Switzerland, schmoozefest, where the fast-sinking dollar dominated the discussion. On any number of critical global economic issues, from Argentina's financial meltdown to deadlocked world-trade talks to the staggering dollar, George W. Bush has effectively hung a "gone fishing" sign on the White House door.

This inattention—an abdication of the global economic stewardship the country has held with vigor and aplomb since the end of the Second World War—has been variously attributed to the war on terrorism, Bush's fidelity to free-market principles, his disdain for multilateralism, or some combination thereof. But the inattention predates September 11, and given that Bush has been one of the most protectionist presidents of the postwar period, the free-market explanation rings equally untrue. And while Bush's unilateralist instincts have surely played a part in Washington's retreat from the global bazaar, there's likely a broader—and more overlooked—ideology on which he is basing his economic policies: neoconservatism.

To the neocons, globalization has always been a dangerous illusion, military might the only currency that ultimately matters. The president evidently follows this line of thinking: No president who takes geoeconomics seriously would ever have appointed Treasury secretaries as inept as Paul O'Neill and John Snow. These appointments hint at the real problem: Bush, with his constricted worldview and benighted conception of American power, just doesn't attach much importance to U.S. economic leadership.

The results of Bush's loyalty to this vision are potentially calamitous. The administration's indifference to global economics has created a void that is quietly being filled by both the European Union and, more ominously, China. If the dollar were to crash, it could lead to a deep recession in the United States and

abroad. Indeed, by disavowing the link between economic integration and geopolitical stability and by woefully undervaluing the link between U.S. global economic leadership and U.S. national security, Bush and the neocons, in their quest to turn what they extol as America's unipolar moment into a unipolar era, are in the process of bringing the moment to a premature close.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BUSH AND THE NEOCONS has been consistently misunderstood and misrepresented. It has been widely portrayed as either the product of a dastardly plot (right-wing Jews hoodwink dimwitted president into invading Iraq in order to make the Middle East safer for Israel) or an accident of history (terrorists strike, and the neocons, once reviled by Bush, suddenly find themselves and their ideas welcomed in the Oval Office). In fact, neither is true. Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle had Bush's ear even before he became president, and Bush sounded a number of neoconservative themes as a candidate in 2000. As Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay observe in their book, *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*, Bush campaigned as a hegemonist—as someone who believes that the world is a jungle and that "America's immense power and the willingness to wield it, even over the objections of others, is the key to securing America's interests in the world."

And this is precisely how the neocons view the world. Contrary to the oft-repeated claim that they are foreign-policy idealists (a misconception they are happy to perpetuate these days), they are, in fact, hegemonists—foreign-policy realists of the most hard-bitten and pessimistic sort. To hegemonists, the world is in a Hobbesian state, power resides mainly in the belly of a B-52, and the only reliable way to keep the barbarians at the gate is to step outside the gate and kill them. They believe the United States should act abroad only to serve its own interests, but because danger lurks around every corner and America's interests are far-flung, self-preservation requires a relentless determination to thwart potential challengers around the globe, something they believe is best undertaken alone, unencumbered by either international institutions or formal coalitions.

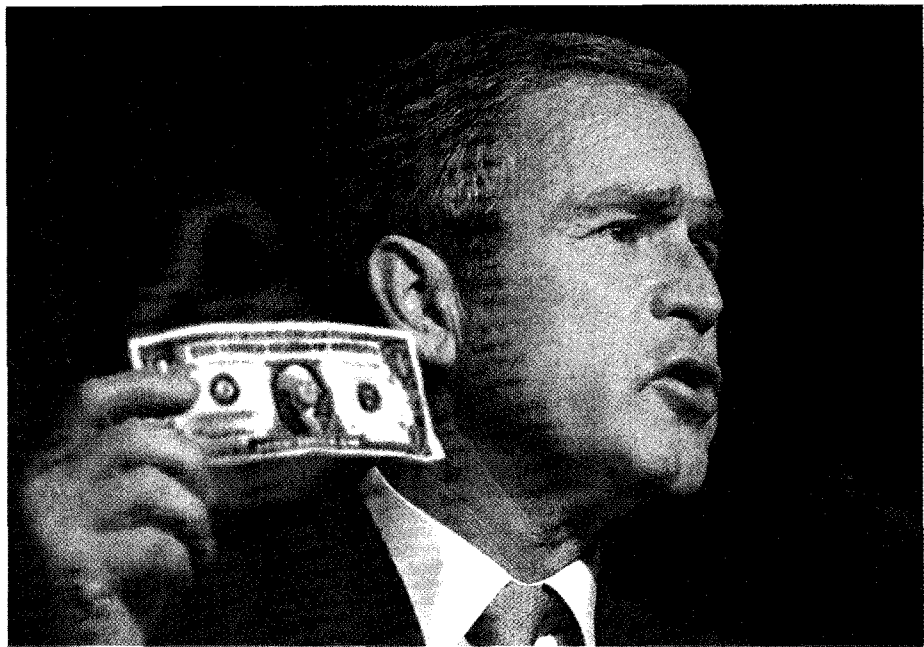
The neocon urtext on the subject is an essay *The Weekly Standard's* William Kristol and Robert Kagan wrote for *Foreign Affairs* in 1996 titled "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," in which they urged Republicans to make "benevolent hegemony" the cornerstone of the GOP's international agenda. By benevolent hegemony they meant a policy of deposing rogue regimes, fomenting democratic revolutions, and otherwise using America's status as the lone superpower to reconfigure geopolitics and cement U.S. global dominance.

More noteworthy than what Kristol and Kagan said, however, was what they didn't say: Not once in their essay did they use the word "globalization," and they devoted just three sentences to America's economic preeminence before moving on to what they considered the real issues. Given the year in which the article was published, these were peculiar omissions: The United States was in the midst of an unprecedented economic boom, and globalization was the word on almost everyone's lips. The Cold War was over, and Francis Fukuyama, now of Johns Hopkins' School of Advanced International Studies, had famously declared history to be at an end and democratic capitalism to be triumphant. Self-interested nation-states were channeling their ambitions and aggressions into economic competition, economic interconnectedness was rendering war obsolete, and it was generally believed that freedom was best served by the free market. "Peace through strength" was being replaced by "peace through prosperity."

The neocons didn't buy it. To them, this was all delusion, and Bill Clinton's treatment of economic power as the new geopolitical coin was leaving the United States dangerously exposed. They pointed out that in the late 19th century, the world had been similarly gripped by globaphoria and a belief that international trade would inexorably lead to world peace. "As World War I showed," Kagan gravely intoned in *The New Republic* in 1997, "the allegedly unbreakable bonds of economic interest snapped in an instant when the armies of powerful nations moved." He and his fellow neocons were convinced that the new globaphoria would also end in tears.

Their response was a sort of smug silence, a confidence that globalization was a trend that would soon pass. In a symposium on American foreign policy published in *Commentary* in 2000 and featuring a roster of neocon luminaries—Kagan, Charles Krauthammer, Norman Podhoretz, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Michael Ledeen—only Fukuyama addressed the issue of globalization at any length. In *Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy*, a 400-page book co-edited by Kagan and Kristol and published that same year, the word "globalization" garnered a half-dozen entries while economic issues were virtually ignored.

TRUE TO HIS NEOCON CONVICTIONS, BUSH DURING HIS first term relegated economics to an afterthought (save for the tax cuts) and globalization to a nonphenomenon. While surrounding himself with foreign-policy heavyweights—Wolfowitz, Dick Cheney, Colin Powell, Donald Rumsfeld, Condoleezza Rice—he hired the hapless O'Neill, later replaced him with the barely sentient Snow, and effectively neutered the Treasury Department and the White House economics staff. An attitude reflected in personnel decisions was also reflected in policy prescriptions. In 2002 the administration had published *The National Security Strategy of the United States*; in a 35-page document offering a meticulously detailed explication of Bush's



Dueling Georges: The Bush administration has pretended that the dollar slide didn't exist.

worldview (it was here that the policy of preemptive war was enshrined), the word "globalization" didn't appear once.

The administration had signaled its disengagement from the international economic arena almost from its first day in office. Through all of 2001, Argentina's economy teetered on the brink of collapse, and with the government set to default on \$132 billion in external debts, there was obvious concern about a possible global financial meltdown. Faced with a similar risk when the Mexican peso collapsed in 1994 and Russia devalued the ruble and defaulted on its loans in 1998, the Clinton administration had sprung into action to limit the damage to the world economy. The Bush administration, by contrast, was indifferent to the Argentine crisis, indifferent to the possible repercussions, and not ashamed to advertise its indifference. "They have been off and on in trouble for 70 years or more," O'Neill told *The Economist* in July 2001. "Nobody forced them to be what they are."

At the time, it was generally assumed that the administration's inaction was motivated by a combination of ideology and antipathy—by its opposition to rescuing Argentina and its creditors from the consequences of their own follies, and by a determination to do the opposite of whatever Clinton had done.

Four years on, however, it is hard not to conclude that Bush shrugged for another reason: He didn't consider such leadership vital to the national interest. That's a conclusion that can reasonably be drawn because Bush has now shrugged in the face of another potential economic crisis that hits a little closer to home: the falling U.S. dollar.

Over the last three years, the dollar has declined by around 35 percent against the euro and 25 percent against the yen, driven by low U.S. household savings, the ballooning U.S. trade and budget deficits, and mounting concern that foreign investors are growing wary of financing America's profligacy. At this point, the dollar's main prop is the continued willingness of Asian central banks, principally Japan's, to buy billions worth of U.S. Treasuries (more than \$200 billion last year) in order to keep their own currencies artificially low and their exports robust. (Pause to savor the irony: An administration determined never to surrender an inch of American sovereignty has

dollar's fall: A weaker dollar would make U.S. exports more competitive and, in theory anyway, help reduce the trade deficit. But it is one thing to want the dollar to depreciate; it is quite another to court financial and economic disaster by refusing to take precautionary measures that might prevent a run on your currency. This is one lesson from the Reagan era that the Bush White House appears to have forgotten or ignored. In 1985, the central banks of the G5 (Italy, France, Great Britain, Spain, Germany), acting chiefly at the behest of the Reagan administration, intervened in the currency markets to stem the dollar's steep rise, and two years later they joined forces again to put a floor under the dollar after it had dropped by some 30 percent. But Ronald Reagan clearly had a different conception of American leadership than George W. Bush.

This time around, we face the prospect of a crashing dollar and a resulting global recession. What's more, a dollar crash would very likely end the greenback's 60-year status as the world's sole reserve currency. True, the dollar has been slowly losing ground for two decades, but its decline has rapidly accelerated during the Bush years, and, of course, the dollar now faces a formidable challenger in the euro. As historian Niall Ferguson has pointed out, when the British pound began to lose its status as the world's preferred currency between the two World Wars, the change hastened the unwinding of the British Empire.

America's finances, The Economist observed, "now look more like those of a banana republic than an economic superpower." Yet no prominent neocon has voiced alarm over the solvency crisis.

now, through its fiscal recklessness, created a situation in which several Asian central banks control the fate of the dollar and, to a large extent, the U.S. economy.)

The fear is that at some point, one or more of the banks will start paring back its Treasury purchases, other foreign investors will get spooked, and there will be a stampede out of the dollar. Former Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker recently rated the chances of a dollar crisis sometime in the next five years at 75 percent. Were this to happen, the consequences could be cataclysmic: U.S. interest rates would spike sharply, stocks would tank, housing prices would fall, and a deep global recession would almost surely follow. As Harvard economist Ken Rogoff, a former International Monetary Fund chief economist who believes the dollar is poised for another 20-percent to 40-percent drop, recently said, "The world is set to jump off the top of a waterfall without knowing how deep the water is below."

It is for this reason that the international financial community has been calling for a coordinated effort to manage, if necessary, the pace of the dollar's decline in order to avoid what French Finance Minister Herve Gaymard called "a global economic catastrophe." But the Bush administration has refused to even consider the idea, insisting that it believes in "open, competitive currency markets," as Treasury Secretary Snow put it during a visit to London in November. (That Snow has kept his job may itself be a source of downward pressure on the dollar: As one London-based analyst told *The Guardian*, "I would sell the currency of any country of which he was the finance minister.")

The truth, of course, is that the administration welcomes the

The lesson appears lost on the Bush administration, which evidently sees no inherent tension between its ambitious foreign policy and the record deficits it has run up. And it is a lesson that also appears lost on the neocons. America's finances, *The Economist* recently observed, "now look more like those of a banana republic than an economic superpower." And yet neither Kristol nor Kagan nor any other prominent neocon has voiced alarm over the spiraling current account and budget deficits. Indeed, as they lay the groundwork for possible future action against Syria and Iran, they are indifferent to the issues of long-term solvency, ignoring the historical truth that it is difficult to sustain an empire that is broke.

THE ONLY AREA IN WHICH THE ADMINISTRATION CAN reasonably claim to have shown any sustained interest is trade policy, and even here it has squandered American authority and influence. The imposition of steel tariffs during Bush's first term, coupled with the 80-percent increase in farm subsidies, completely undermined U.S. credibility on trade issues. Moreover, under Bush, the United States has ceased to be the driving force behind efforts to liberalize world trade; instead, the administration has put most of its energy into pursuing bilateral trade agreements that are primarily intended as sops to various domestic constituencies.

In short, Washington has taken its hand off the wheel of the global economy, and as a result, America's aura of indispensability is eroding. "There is a palpable concern in foreign-policy circles that the U.S. position in the global economy is at a

low point, and it is a tragedy,” says Morgan Stanley’s Stephen Roach. On a visit to India in December, a congressional delegation comprising mainly Republican congressional staffers was surprised to hear from a number of business and government officials that India is increasingly focusing on its budding economic rivalry with China and is less inclined to pay attention to Washington these days.

By its very nature, globalization tends to disperse power; it spreads wealth, and with wealth comes power. But there can be no doubt that America’s global preeminence is now being challenged in a way that wouldn’t have been possible but for Bush’s myopic foreign policy. The idea that Europe might vie for global influence with the United States was once laughable. Not anymore: The EU has been using its much-disparaged “soft power”—namely, trade links and economic aid—to stitch together alliances throughout Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East.

But, of all the unintended consequences of Bush’s foreign policy, it is the growing stature and assertiveness of China that is surely the most ironic and troubling. Through the 1990s, the rise of China was a neocon obsession. They were convinced that Beijing was intent on challenging American hegemony, that confrontation was inevitable, and that the Clinton administration, which had made trade the centerpiece of its China policy, was, to borrow Lenin’s dictum, selling the rope by which the United States would eventually be hanged. In numerous screeds in *The Weekly Standard* and other publications, Kristol and Kagan all but accused the Clinton White House and the U.S. business community of treason, and they argued that containment, not engagement, was the necessary response to China’s growing economic and military prowess.

Four years into the Bush presidency, what the neocons most dreaded—an emboldened China undercutting American influence around the world—is coming to pass, and it is being helped along considerably by Bush’s neoconservative foreign policy. “The Chinese didn’t imagine they would be in this position,” says Fukuyama. “I think they are quite surprised at the way we’ve abdicated the field to them.”

China has enjoyed its greatest gains in East Asia, where it has long sought to eclipse the United States as the dominant player and where the United States has largely gone AWOL since 9-11. In addition to signing a raft of bilateral trade agreements, Beijing is now in the process of creating, in conjunction with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, what will be the world’s largest free-trade zone when it takes effect in 2010. At the same time, China has been cultivating a wider web of influence, particularly in Latin America, where the Bush policy has been one of abject neglect. On a visit last November to Argentina, Chile, and Brazil (now China’s second-

largest trading partner), Chinese President Hu Jintao announced \$30 billion in new investment earmarked for Latin America, and Chinese corporate leaders accompanying him signed some 400 deals.

In *Present Dangers*, Kristol and Kagan dismissed the 1990s as a “squandered decade,” a view echoed by Bush in his recent inaugural address in which he cuttingly referred to the ’90s as “years of repose, years of sabbatical.” But those were only years of repose and sabbatical if you believe that globalization is a myth and that America’s position in the world is purely a function of its military prowess. Clinton had no doubt about globalization’s authenticity. He also had a more complex and subtle view of American power and a different conception of what was required to bolster America’s position in the post-Cold



Chile Reception: Chinese President Hu Jintao (waving) will invest \$30 billion in Latin America.

War world, and it turns out he was right. Was the United States in a stronger position four years ago to influence events around the world than it is now? It is a question that hardly needs to be asked.

The Clintonites never claimed that geoeconomics had displaced geopolitics. But they recognized that with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the advent of globalization, America’s economic strength could be a critical tool in keeping the peace while extending U.S. dominance. As Robert Wright wrote in January in *The New York Times*, Bill Clinton saw “the tight link between economic and political liberty in the information age, the essentially redeeming effect of globalization.” Because George W. Bush and the neocons see nothing redeeming about globalization and believe military might is all that ultimately matters, this link has been lost on them, and America’s unipolar moment is being lost as a result. **TAP**

Michael Steinberger is a Prospect senior correspondent.

The Middle East: Thinking Big

President Bush's several policies don't connect. Here's a better way to bring greater security, democracy, and development to the region.

BY FLYNT LEVERETT

ONE CERTAINLY CANNOT FAULT GEORGE W. BUSH for lacking what his father famously called “the vision thing.” Immediately after the September 11 attacks, the president announced a war on all terrorists “with global reach,” and warned state sponsors of terrorism “to stand with us or with the terrorists.” Two months after the attacks, Bush endorsed a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict more explicitly than any of his predecessors. He developed a grand vision for political and economic liberalization in the Middle East, denouncing the 60-year-old policy “mistake” of cossetting authoritarian regimes in the Arab world for short-term strategic gains. And he explicitly linked his vision of a democratic Middle East to his strategies of regime change in Baghdad and Arab-Israeli peacemaking, arguing that the creation of democratic states in post-Saddam Hussein Iraq and Palestine would stimulate the spread of democracy.

Unfortunately, while talking big, the president has thought small—in an overly compartmentalized manner—about each of these issues. In the aftermath of Saddam Hussein’s overthrow, the distribution of power among the states along the strategically vital Persian Gulf has been thrown into a potentially dangerous imbalance. With a severely weakened Iraq, Iran is emerging as a more powerful state in the region. Along with the prospect of a Shia-dominated government in Baghdad, the possibility of a nuclear-capable Iran under consolidated conservative leadership (with reformist President Mohammed Khatami stepping down in June) represents a potential watershed in the Persian Gulf’s balance of power, causing concern in Sunni-majority states throughout the region. The negative impact on regional stability of an increase in Iran’s power and assertiveness would be exacerbated if a consolidated conservative leadership in Tehran decided once again to step up Iranian support to large but politically marginalized Shia populations in states like Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait. At the same time, America’s capacity to deal with this situation through its traditional bilateral partnerships in the region has been weakened by the Bush administration’s largely self-inflicted blows to its credibility as a mediator between Arabs and Israelis and as a promoter of reform.

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

The president’s conceptual timidity is especially unfortunate because there is both a glaring need and a real opportunity for the United States to think big about the Middle East. The September 11 attacks, the launch of a global war on terrorism, and the U.S.-led military campaign to unseat Hussein have had an impact on the regional balance of power comparable in strategic significance to the shifts in Europe’s distribution of power wrought by World War II. U.S. policy has yet to deal, proactively and thoughtfully, with this challenging reality.

After World War II, America developed an approach to Western Europe that included economic reconstruction (the Marshall Plan), collective security structures (NATO), and the institutionalization of democratic politics. All this was part of a foundational strategy aimed at containing Soviet expansionism. The United States eventually supported development of cooperative security mechanisms—the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which matured into the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE)—extending across both the Western and Soviet blocs. The goals of these cooperative security structures were to keep the competition between the Soviet and Western blocs within tolerable limits, to provide the rival superpowers and their allies with “rules of the road” to regulate their interactions, and to legitimate the encouragement of political reform within the Soviet bloc.

This evolution was a crucial step in the eventual success of America’s Cold War foreign policy. The so-called Helsinki Process, launched in 1972 and culminating in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, rested on a basic bargain: The United States committed itself not to use force to change borders or forms of government in Europe; in return, the Soviets acknowledged internationally binding norms on human rights. Contemporary American conservatives celebrate the importance of those Soviet commitments on human rights in empowering the dissident and civil-society activists that were so crucial to the ultimate demise of the Soviet bloc. But those same conservatives studiously ignore the other part of the Helsinki bargain, for which they roundly excoriated Henry Kissinger at the time but which proved to be a strategic masterstroke: American acceptance that

even the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites had legitimate security concerns was necessary not only to winning Soviet agreement to the Helsinki Accords' human-rights "basket," but also to undermining communism and ensuring a "soft landing" for Europe as communism was collapsing.

Today, the United States needs a similar grand strategy for the broader Middle East. Such a strategy would weave the various strands of U.S. Middle East policy—prosecuting the war on terrorism, stabilizing Iraq, containing Iran, pursuing Arab-Israeli peace, encouraging reform—into an integrated approach to collective security for the post-9-11 world. The objective would be the containment of Islamist extremism, which is the source of the most potent terrorist threats to the United States and its allies.

A REGIONAL FRAMEWORK

An integrated strategy for the Middle East could also lay the foundations for cooperative security mechanisms in a region badly in need of renewed and enhanced strategic equilibrium. Of course, cooperative security cannot replace collective security in the Middle East. The United States will continue to pursue important bilateral security relationships in the region, including the direct and indirect security guarantees we extend to key allies like Israel, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. But, just as the CSCE/OSCE cooperative security structures in Europe coexisted with NATO and several interlocking bilateral security relationships, the United States should now consider complementing efforts to enhance collective security in the Middle East with the development of a cooperative security framework for the region.

A regional security framework for the Middle East, based loosely on the CSCE/OSCE experience, should be inclusive in its membership (encompassing states with which the United States has problematic relations, as well as U.S. allies), comprehensive in its substantive scope (encompassing issues of economic and political transformation and the fight against terrorism, as well as more traditional security problems), and rooted in cooperative security through the application of mutually agreed-upon norms. These include peaceful resolution of conflicts, noninterference in the internal affairs of other states, nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, opposition to terrorism, and respect for human rights. To join the framework, states would have to endorse the mutually agreed-upon norms and commit to regular dialogues with other member states to review and evaluate participants' adherence to the norms.

Establishing a regional security framework for the Middle East could start with an initial focus on the Persian Gulf. The framework should include, at minimum, the United States, the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates), and Iraq. It might also include some of Iraq's other neighbors, such as Jordan, Syria, and Turkey. Additional international players, such as the European Union, might be included as external partners.

The framework would definitely need to include Iran, but this should not be seen as a reward for bad behavior. To the contrary: Including Iran is essential for stabilizing the regional bal-

ance of power. Taking Iran into a regional security arrangement would also oblige Tehran to sign up to the framework's agreed-upon norms. These could be used by the United States to hold the Islamic Republic publicly accountable, in a regionally legitimated forum that would give Washington a better chance of rallying regional and international support in the face of Iranian misbehavior. This inclusion would actually improve U.S. leverage for stopping Iran's pursuit of weapons-of-mass-destruction capabilities and support for terrorist activity.

The United States would also get more out of its relations with established allies, such as Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf Cooperation Council states—a key step in revitalizing the war on terrorism. By establishing regional norms and standards on issues such as terrorist financing, the examples of states that are more cooperative with U.S. goals could be used as leverage on other states. A regional mechanism could also help coordinate the contributions of regional states to post-conflict stabilization in Iraq—and hold those states publicly accountable for failures in implementation.

A regional security framework could bolster American efforts

An integrated framework for the Middle East could transform the region militarily and economically.

to encourage reform in the region. When Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah first promulgated his Arab reform charter in 2003, he had no venue in which to present the idea other than the Arab League, which proved useless for implementing concrete reforms. A regional mechanism that included various aspects of reform (economic, educational, social, etc.) in its mandate would provide cover to Abdullah or other reform-minded leaders in the region. In a regional forum, praise for states taking positive steps would be less likely to seem patronizing.

Over time, a framework focused initially on the Persian Gulf could be expanded to encompass other regional arenas, including the vexing issues of Arab-Israeli peacemaking. Israel would, no doubt, suffer a certain measure of rhetorical abuse, but the gains to Israel from Middle Eastern states accepting it as a member of a regional security forum would more than compensate, and could facilitate regular diplomatic interaction between Israel and other regional states.

If President Bush wants to match his bold words with notable accomplishments, he needs to start thinking big about the Middle East. The broader Middle East remains, in comparative terms, the least institutionalized region on the planet. Talk is cheap, and war is expensive. To remake this critical region, the United States needs to become at least as much architect and builder of regional structures as wordsmith or warrior. **TAP**

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The Gravest Danger

The president who invaded Iraq citing fear of nuclear blackmail has been cavalier about preventing it elsewhere.

BY GRAHAM ALLISON

WHEN ASKED IN THE FIRST PRESIDENTIAL debate of 2004 what constitutes the “single most serious threat to American national security,” there was a brief instant of agreement between President Bush and Senator Kerry. Both answered, “Nuclear terrorism.” The president repeated that he agreed with his opponent that the biggest threat facing the country is nuclear weapons “in the hands of a terrorist enemy.”

To prevent a nuclear terrorist attack on an American city, the administration accomplished a great deal more in its first term than the critics acknowledge. But if one stands back and examines the forest rather than the trees, even more remains to be done. The first step in meeting this threat is to realize its urgency, recognize the weaknesses in the current response, and define an agenda of actions that can stop terrorists from destroying the core of an American city.

For Americans to fully grasp what an act of nuclear terrorism would mean, they should imagine such an event happening in their own neighborhood. To assist in that effort, www.nuclearterror.org allows one to put in his or her own zip code and visualize the consequence of the explosion of a small (10 kiloton) nuclear bomb. From the epicenter of the blast to a distance of approximately one-third of a mile, temperatures reaching 540,000 degrees Fahrenheit would vaporize every structure and individual instantly. A second circle of destruction extending three-quarters of a mile from ground zero would leave buildings looking like the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. Fires and radiation would scorch the earth up to a mile away.

Does the Bush’s administration’s performance suggest it has really gotten its mind around this threat? What has the administration done to combat this frightening specter? And what has been left undone?

IN ITS ATTEMPT TO FASHION A COHERENT POST-SEPTEMBER 11 strategy for combating catastrophic terrorism, the Bush administration got a number of things right. First, it has made an important conceptual advance in recognizing that the gravest danger lies in what Vice President Dick Cheney termed the “nexus between terrorists and weapons of mass destruc-

tion”—terrorists armed with nuclear weapons. It rightly rejected a status quo that let terrorists and weapons-of-mass-destruction threats hide behind a shield of state sovereignty. It employed the full spectrum of American military power to topple the Taliban in Afghanistan and deny terrorists sanctuary anywhere in the world. And it has been prepared to revise traditional Cold War policies of deterrence and containment in those cases where they are no longer sufficient. Deterrence, which discouraged other states from launching a nuclear attack on the United States through the threat of overwhelming retaliation, is less applicable to suicide bombers or terrorists with no return address.

Less noticed amid the global uproar over the administration’s aggressive foreign policy were specific initiatives it undertook to reduce the danger of a nuclear 9-11. President Bush successfully proposed United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540, which requires states to criminalize proliferation, and promoted a new Proliferation Security Initiative, which stretches existing legal frameworks to allow the search of any vehicle suspected of transporting weapons-of-mass-destruction cargo, and now includes more than 60 nations. After its own initial skepticism, the administration eventually enlisted other members of the G8 to match America’s \$1 billion annual commitment over the next decade to secure and eliminate former Soviet nuclear weapons. The United States took the lead in cooperation with Russia in extracting five potential nuclear weapons from Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Uzbekistan. A new American-led program, the Global Threat Reduction Initiative, began the vital work of securing bomb-making materials at risky research reactors around the world. And during Bush’s first term, Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi renounced his nuclear-weapons program, and the secret black-market network of Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan was exposed.

DESPITE THESE PRAISEWORTHY SUCCESSES, IF WE JUMP to the bottom-line question of whether we are safer from a nuclear terrorist attack today than we were on September 11, 2001, the answer is no. The threat of a nuclear bomb exploding in the next year is at least as high as it was on the day al-Qaeda crashed jumbo jets into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

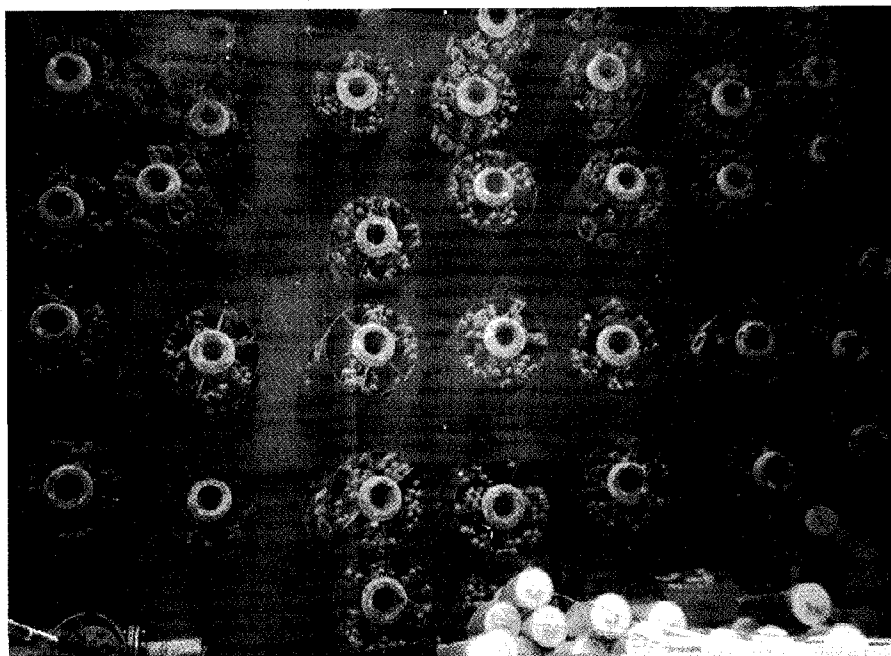
Al-Qaeda remains a formidable enemy with clear nuclear ambitions. The former head of CIA's bin Laden task force, Michael Scheuer, has detailed how in May 2003, Osama Bin Laden acquired a fatwa from a Saudi cleric, providing a religious justification to use nuclear weapons against America. Titled "A Treatise on the Legal Status of Using Weapons of Mass Destruction Against Infidels," it asserts that "if a bomb that killed 10 million of them and burned as much of their land as they have burned Muslims' land were dropped on them, it would be permissible." Scheuer, who followed terrorism and militant Islam for much of his 22-year career, is particularly troubled by "the careful, professional manner in which al-Qaeda was seeking to acquire nuclear weapons."

Russia's 12-time-zone expanse contains more nuclear weapons and materials than any country in the world, including more than 8,000 assembled warheads and enough weapons-usable material for 80,000 more, much of it vulnerable to theft. Thirteen years on, according to Department of Energy data, not even half of Russia's nuclear weapons and materials have been secured to acceptable standards. These present attractive targets for terrorists shopping for a bomb. In her confirmation hearing, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice agreed, stating, "I really can think of nothing more important than being able to proceed with the safe dismantlement of the Soviet arsenal, with nuclear safeguards to make certain that nuclear-weapons facilities and the like are well secured."

But after America was attacked by bin Laden, what happened to U.S. spending and related efforts to secure nuclear weapons? Funding for the critical Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program for securing loose fissile material remained at about the same level. And the brute fact is that in Russia, fewer potential nuclear bombs were secured in the two years after 9-11 than in the two years before.

Nuclear materials remain vulnerable to theft in a number of other countries as well. As inspectors have been unraveling and retracing A.Q. Khan's global black-market network, we now know that Libya was not his only customer. Clearly he traded nuclear secrets and technologies to the North Koreans for their assistance with Pakistani missile programs, and inspectors are still searching for the results of his dozen trips to Iran in the '90s. Although in the past four years some highly enriched uranium has been removed from five countries, bombs-worth amounts of nuclear material remain at risky research reactors in more than 20 transitional and developing states, including Belarus and Uzbekistan. In some cases, there is little more protecting the weapons-quality material than a padlock and an unarmed guard.

In the past two years, Iran has rushed to complete its factories for producing highly enriched uranium and plutonium. Today it stands only months from that finish line. Once Tehran achieves



Smoking Guns?: North Korean spent nuclear fuel rods

this goal, it will be able to transfer nuclear weapons to its terrorist client and collaborator, Hezbollah, which has already killed 260 Americans in attacks in Lebanon and at Khobar Towers.

Certifiably the world's most promiscuous proliferator, the economically desperate North Korean regime has demonstrated that it will sell missiles to whomever will pay: Iraq, Iran, Libya, and Yemen. Yet the United States has looked the other way while, since January 2003, North Korea has withdrawn from the nonproliferation treaty, kicked out the International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors, turned off the video cameras that were monitoring the 8,000 fuel rods that contain enough plutonium for six additional nuclear weapons, trucked the fuel rods to reprocessing plants, and begun producing more plutonium every day that will allow them to make more nuclear arms. Al-Qaeda, meanwhile, is shopping the black market for a nuclear bomb, and North Korea may soon have bombs to sell. Those who imagine that Kim Jong-Il would stop short of selling nuclear-weapon materials should reflect on a *New York Times* report that Pyongyang supplied Libya with enough uranium hexafluoride to make a bomb.

Thus, despite progress made on some fronts in the battle against nuclear terrorism, developments in Russia, Iran, and North Korea leave Americans more vulnerable to a nuclear 9-11 today than we were four years ago. And despite the president and vice president's clarity in identifying this threat and calling on Americans to "get our minds around it," the gap between the administration's words and deeds remains wide.

The gravity of the potential consequences requires that the president give absolute priority to this challenge. In the Cold War, we recognized that preventing a global nuclear war was a necessary condition for pursuing any other objective. In Ronald Reagan's oft-quoted one-liner, "A nuclear war can never be won and must never be fought." The face of that danger today is a nuclear terrorist attack on an American city. This

would be a world-altering event. The categorical imperative, therefore, is to do everything technically feasible on the fastest possible time line to prevent it.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE? AS IT ESTABLISHES PRIORITIES for the second term, the Bush administration should begin by getting its mind around the largely unrecognized good news: Nuclear terrorism is preventable. There is an agenda of specific, feasible, and affordable actions that, if taken, would reduce the likelihood of a terrorist's Hiroshima essentially to zero. A strategy for pursuing that agenda should be organized under a Doctrine of Three No's: No Loose Nukes, No New Nascent Nukes and No New Nuclear Weapons States. The strategic imperative is to keep terrorists from acquiring nuclear weapons or the materials from which weapons could be made. As a fact of physics: no highly enriched uranium or plutonium, no nuclear explosion, no nuclear terrorism. It is that simple.

No Loose Nukes first requires securing all nuclear weapons and weapons-usable material, on the fastest possible timetable,

There is an agenda of specific, feasible, and affordable actions that, if taken, would reduce the chance of nuclear terrorism essentially to zero.

to a new "gold standard." Locking up valuable or dangerous items is something human beings know how to do. The United States does not lose gold from Fort Knox, nor Russia treasures from the Kremlin armory. The United States and Russia should jointly develop a standard and then act at once to secure their own nuclear materials. Russian President Vladimir Putin must be made to feel this in his gut. He has to visualize the Chechens who killed 172 schoolchildren at Beslan exploding a nuclear bomb in Moscow. President Bush must use his influence to talk Putin into doing what only he can do: Guarantee that every weapon and potential weapon is locked up with utmost urgency. Moscow must come to see safeguarding those weapons not as a favor to the United States but as an essential protection for its own country and citizens.

Once Putin is on board, the two countries should launch a new "Alliance Against Nuclear Terrorism." Its mission would be to lock down all weapons and materials everywhere and cleaning out what cannot be locked down. This would require engaging the leaders of other nuclear states on the basis of a bedrock of vital national interest: No nuclear bomb can ever go off in my capital. The global clean-out of at-risk nuclear material must be a multilateral effort with a target of finishing in 12 or 18 months—not mañana.

No New Nascent Nukes means no new national capabilities to enrich uranium or reprocess plutonium. A loophole in the 1968 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty allows states to develop these capacities in civilian programs, then withdraw from the treaty and declare themselves a nuclear state. The proposition of no new

nascent nukes acknowledges what the national-security community is just beginning to realize: Highly enriched uranium and plutonium are bombs just about to hatch.

The crucial challenge to this today is Iran. Preventing Iranian completion of its nuclear infrastructure will require a combination of benefits and credible threats to persuade Tehran to accept a grand bargain for denuclearization. Such a bargain should include a generous fuel-cycle agreement, acceptance of Iran's Bushehr reactor, the relaxation of trade sanctions, and a security guarantee that the United States will not attack Iran to change its regime by force. In exchange, Iran would freeze and, over time, dismantle its enrichment and reprocessing facilities. In current negotiations, British, French, and German leaders have focused on an extended voluntary moratorium on enrichment or reprocessing. But unless and until the United States enters the game, the haggling between Europeans and Iranians will likely offer little more than temporary delay, or even cover for secret Iranian efforts to complete its nuclear-enrichment program.

No New Nuclear-Weapons States draws a line under the current

eight nuclear powers and says unambiguously "no more." The immediate test of this principle is North Korea. To prevent Pyongyang from becoming a Nukes "R" Us for terrorists will require both carrots and sticks, including a bilateral nonaggression promise should Pyongyang concede the nuclear issue and a credible military threat to the country's nuclear facilities should nego-

tiations fail. The great powers share real national interests here, because each fears nuclear weapons in the hands of terrorists, whether they are al-Qaeda or Chinese separatists.

In the case of North Korea, sharp internal divisions have paralyzed the Bush administration. As a result, it has offered a policy of no carrots and no sticks. In Cheney's words, "We don't negotiate with evil; we defeat it." But rather than defeat it, the administration has simultaneously threatened North Korea and ignored it. The United States needs a new strategy, one that subordinates all other Korean Peninsula policy objectives to the goal of preventing a nuclear 9-11.

In these dangerous times, when terrorists target civilians with acts of unprecedented destruction, citizens must evaluate elected leaders' actions to keep them safe. Assessing what the Bush administration has done, and left undone, to prevent nuclear terrorism, what grade would it earn at protecting America from this ultimate catastrophe?

After 9-11, the White House warned, "History will judge harshly those who saw coming danger but failed to act." If so, President Bush is fortunate that his first-term report need not be his final grade. What is needed to earn an "A" is clear. All Americans must hope that the president and his renewed administration rise to this challenge. **TAP**

***Graham Allison** is the founding dean of Harvard's modern John F. Kennedy School of Government and Director of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. He was Assistant Secretary of Defense in the first Clinton Administration.*

Disconnected

There are progressive foreign-policy thinkers, and they even produce ideas. So why aren't Democratic politicians?

BY MATTHEW YGLESIAS

ON THE EVENING OF JANUARY 4, I HAD DINNER with a small group of progressive intellectuals at a Capitol Hill restaurant. The question at hand, though unstated, was obvious: What ails the Democrats, and what's to be done about it? As wine was poured and salad moved to entrée to dessert, many ideas—most of them good—were put forward. Conspicuous for its absence until I brought it up, however, was the party's single biggest problem area: national security.

Certainly there are ways that John Kerry could have won the 2004 election without improving his performance on security issues, most notably by doing better than a dismal 18 percent among the 22 percent of voters who told exit pollsters that “moral values” were the most important issue in the campaign. But there's a basic problem of logic here. Voters who think that maintaining traditional norms about gender roles and sexual behavior should be a top priority of the federal government probably *ought* to be voting Republican. This just isn't what liberals believe, so people who do believe it would be acting irrationally to vote Democratic.

But Kerry's 40 percent share among the third of the electorate citing either Iraq or terrorism as their top concern is another matter entirely. Liberals most emphatically *do* believe that the government should keep the population safe from foreign threats. Voters who think that this is important are voters that any self-respecting political party ought to aspire to win. And if Democrats do figure out how to win their votes, they'll start winning presidential elections. Mere parity on the topic of na-

tional security would have won Kerry the election, rendering whatever other political problems exist with the Democrats on matters of style or substance irrelevant.

About a month earlier, the Democratic Leadership Council's (DLC) Will Marshall, head of the group's Progressive Policy Institute, made it clear that some are keenly aware of the central importance of national security to today's politics by organizing a lunchtime discussion of *New Republic* Editor Peter Beinart's post-election call to arms, “A Fighting Faith.” In it, Beinart analogized contemporary progressive politics to the situation obtain-

ing in the mid-1940s, when Democrats were split between Harry Truman's Cold Warrior wing and a group around Henry Wallace that regarded confrontation with the Soviet Union as, at best, a distraction from more pressing matters and, at worst, dangerous and counterproductive. Cast in the role of today's Wallacites were opponents of the Afghan war, like Michael Moore and the founders of MoveOn.org, with the implication that the Democrats would not enjoy success until the party was purged of these insidious doves

(MoveOn's organizers deny that they opposed the Afghan war). Marshall agreed, proclaiming that the party “is inherently divided” on matters of national security and that the victory of his centrist faction was vital to the continued health of American progressivism.

This image of a party divided is quite universal, even if enthusiasm for the Marshall-Beinart course of treatment is not. But it's sharply at odds with underlying realities. Yes, progressives—both Democratic politicians and liberal journalists and intellec-



tuals—were split over the Iraq War, and yes, that's an important matter. But beyond that, and looking forward, it's hard to detect any major substantive disagreements. Over the past three years, policy recommendations have emanated from various progressive institutions that cover a range of positions on the ideological spectrum. And what's most remarkable about them—from the DLC's *Progressive Internationalism*, to The Century Foundation's *Defeating the Jihadists*, to the Center for American Progress' *Failing Grades*, to the House Homeland Security Committee minority staff's *Winning the War on Terror*—has not been their differences but their similarities. Over and over again one hears that the Bush administration has been unduly focused on the problem of hunting down and killing individual terrorists and insufficiently attentive to the threat of a catastrophic nuclear attack.

Progressive Internationalism describes denying terrorists access to weapons of mass destruction as “the most important line of defense in the age of terror.” *Defeating the Jihadists*, quoting the Bush administration's own official “National Security Strategy,” deems nuclear terrorism the “gravest danger” facing the

vision during the campaign, but in the wake of his defeat it became a source of further conflict, with hawks arguing that he should have been more clearly hawkish and doves that more forthright opposition would have paved the road to victory. Prominent liberal bloggers Kevin Drum and Duncan Black both reacted with instinctive hostility to the news that Kenneth Pollack, author of the influential *The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq*, had a new book out on Iran. Never mind that Pollack's policy proposal—more vigorous multilateral diplomacy—is hardly objectionable to the liberal point of view.

This bitterness is unfortunate. Simply put, far too large a proportion of the party's leading politicians and national-security hands supported the war for the doves to marginalize them, and far too large a proportion of the party's voters opposed it for the hawks to marginalize them. But healing the breach won't be enough, because the party's political weakness on national security far predates the Iraq War. Tempting as it is to look at John Kerry's flawed campaign and flawed personality—“The reason people thought he was a flip-flopper,” one foreign-policy adviser to the campaign told me, “was that he kept flip-flopping”—and

conclude that he was personally responsible for the problem, the reality is otherwise. The sheer historical scope of the problem must be recognized. Democrats have been losing the national-security issue for decades, and it's unlikely that it's merely a coincidence that Democrats keep nominating candidates who aren't persuasive on the topic.

The problems in Kerry's campaign reflected deeper structural problems inside Democratic politics. Despite a reason-

Tempting as it is to look at John Kerry's flawed campaign and personality and conclude that he was responsible for his party's problems with respect to foreign policy, the reality is otherwise.

country. Both note the irony that the administration has been much stronger on anti-proliferation rhetoric than substance. “Democrats will pursue a collective approach that engages both the United Nations and North Korea's neighbors,” says the DLC. “The United States should pursue international and bilateral sanctions against proliferating states such as North Korea,” says The Century Foundation. Both recommend allocating more funds to the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program and expanding its ambit beyond the former Soviet Union. On the much-debated subject of democracy promotion, the party's right wing thinks that “the United States should support people struggling to build an independent civil society, while orchestrating international pressure on ruling elites to reform.” The left, meanwhile, believes that “the long-term interests of the United States will best be served by actively influencing [friendly] governments to eliminate the causes for popular unrest, particularly when they involve civil liberties infringements and human rights abuses.” *Progressive Internationalism* states that preemptive war should be “an option,” but that George W. Bush has relied too heavily on it. *Defeating the Jihadists* says it will “likely remain an important part of American counterterrorism policy in the future.” Hard to find the differences there.

This is not to say that no division exists. It certainly does: Liberals suffer from an intense and lingering bitterness over the Iraq War. Kerry's muddled position helped paper over that di-

vision during the campaign, but in the wake of his defeat it became a source of further conflict, with hawks arguing that he should have been more clearly hawkish and doves that more forthright opposition would have paved the road to victory. Prominent liberal bloggers Kevin Drum and Duncan Black both reacted with instinctive hostility to the news that Kenneth Pollack, author of the influential *The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq*, had a new book out on Iran. Never mind that Pollack's policy proposal—more vigorous multilateral diplomacy—is hardly objectionable to the liberal point of view.

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The problems in Kerry's campaign reflected deeper structural problems inside Democratic politics. Despite a reason-

ably broad consensus among left-of-center security hands about what should be done, the party's political operatives are unable to turn that consensus into a compelling political narrative. Democrats are reluctant to address security issues except when forced to do so, and, as a result, they discover that when they are so forced, they aren't very good at it. Political failure breeds further reluctance, which breeds further failure—no one develops the relevant ability to spin security for partisan gain, and because no one can win on security, no one learns how to campaign on it. For example, I asked a leading policy expert who worked with the campaign how Kerry managed to come up with a statement on Iran that was basically nonsensical and didn't reflect the views of anyone who would have been in charge of the topic in a Kerry administration (in the first debate, he said that “the United States should have offered the opportunity to provide [Iran] the nuclear fuel, test them, see whether or not they were actually looking for it for peaceful purposes”). “The consultants,” I was told, “didn't think it was a voting issue.”

ON ONE LEVEL, THE CONSULTANTS WERE RIGHT: VOTERS did not make up their minds last November based on who had the better Iran policy. Similarly, the political aides who decided that there was no need to criticize Bush's hypocritical and ineffective democracy-promotion strategy were no doubt correct that relations with Egypt and Saudi Arabia weren't

"voting issues." When the September 11 commission's best-selling final report essentially adopted the consensus liberal critique of Bush's war on terrorism as its Chapter 12, the Kerry campaign quickly endorsed the commission's work. But aside from the relatively minor issue of creating a national-intelligence directorship, the campaign barely mentioned any of the recommendations. One commission staffer involved in the drafting of Chapter 12 told me that as far as he could tell, the campaign staff did not try to seriously communicate with the commission regarding the substance of the recommendations that were, ostensibly at least, to be the center of Kerry's war on terrorism. Again, not a voting issue.

It would be nice to be able to say that these were eccentric decisions on the part of the Kerry campaign, but that probably is not the case. Rather, they reflect the ingrained belief of the Democrats' consultant class that the key to campaign success is to focus on poll-tested messages that address the voters' handful of top concerns. Polls showed that voters were concerned that things were going badly in Iraq, so Kerry talked about it. They showed that voters were concerned about America's relations with its allies, so he talked about that. This approach may work well enough on domestic issues where the goodies—tax credits, Social Security checks, new schools, lower insurance premiums—are concrete and separable.

But national security is not like that. The politics of national security are dominated by an essentially metaphorical competition over strength, will, and determination. The key is that, as

New America Foundation senior fellow Mark Schmitt has written on his Web log, *the Decembrist*, "It's not what you say about the issues, it's what the issues say about you." Americans expect the president to keep them safe, and a candidate who doesn't do enough to emphasize security comes across as someone who's not up to the job. Voters may not have been hankering for a candidate to promise to expand the regular Army and double the number of special-operations troops. But those were planks of the Kerry platform, and if he had emphasized them, it would have cut against unflattering stereotypes of Democratic weakness and transformed public perception of the party into one that sees liberals as the ones prepared to dedicate real resources to national security and not just talk a good game.

Ostentatious condemnations of Bush's unilateralism, by contrast, accomplish little. Indeed, though an emphasis on getting more help from allies may have polled well, it also reinforced precisely the caricature that the Republicans sought to create of a Democratic administration whose foreign policy would be centered on "permission slips" and "global tests." Bush was—and is—able to get away with murky and incoherent approaches to issues like Pakistan, Iran, and North Korea because Republicans are fundamentally trusted to keep America safe. For Democrats, addressing these second-tier issues would provide an opportunity to change the way the party is seen. In 1992, voters were not necessarily crying out for a candidate who would "end welfare as we know it." But Bill Clinton's promise to do so altered perceptions of the Democratic Party and allowed

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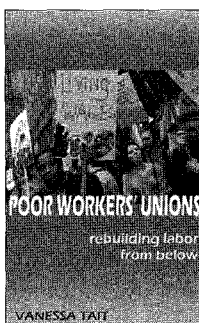
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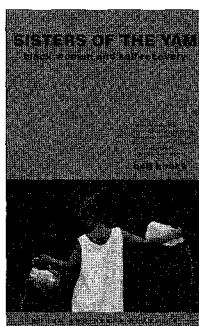


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Clinton to get a hearing for his ideas on other fronts.

If Kerry's handlers seemed unprepared to handle the national-security issue, that's largely because they *were* unprepared. Presidential races are rare, and operatives cut their teeth in national politics running campaigns for the House and the Senate. Because the national-security issue is of limited relevance to these races, and because it's been a weak issue for Democrats for decades, the party's operatives have learned to avoid it as much as possible. On the Republican side, conversely, it's been a source of strength, and clever campaign managers have sought opportunities to turn the discussion to foreign and military policy. This has granted them a reservoir of experience and habits that have served them well at the presidential level, where the topic can't be dodged.



Slogan or Reality?: John Kerry last June in Riviera Beach, Florida

Democrats have gained no such experience, and it shows—not merely in the relatively inept handling of the security issue but in a near-pathological reluctance to engage it. Every time Kerry seemed to get the upper hand in the foreign-policy debate, the papers would be filled with advice from (often anonymous) party strategists that now was the time to “pivot” away from national security and toward jobs and health care rather than to go in for the kill. The thinking here was bizarre: Why disengage from a debate you're winning? The very suggestion only served to underscore Bush's message: Don't trust the Democrats to keep you safe. After all, they don't seem to trust themselves to handle the topic consistently.

Misleading lessons from the Clinton years have exacerbated the problem. A generation of liberals who saw their greatest successes in the 1990s has convinced itself that that era—after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when foreign-policy questions were less important—was normal. During the recent period of post-election commiserations, three friends on the Hill outlined the Democrats' path to resurgence, but they did so with a crucial qualification: It would happen only after the salience of the security issue declines. Re-reading John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira's

popular book, *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, after the election, I noticed the same thing. The majority was repeatedly prophesied to emerge “when memories of 9-11 fade,” or equivalent formulations. But while memories of the attacks as such are likely to fade (and indeed have to a reasonable extent), the salience of the issue isn't going anywhere. A study by Democratic pollster Mark Penn has shown that public interest in world affairs reached a low point in the 1990s not seen since the Great Depression. Democrats can hope that it happens again, but hope is not a plan. Besides, history suggests that it will not. The Clinton years were highly unusual; foreign policy has consistently been a prominent element of presidential campaigns since America's emergence as a major world power in the Spanish-American War, and will probably continue to be for the foreseeable future. The only reliable method of pushing it off the agenda is a 1930s-style economic collapse, but hoping for something like that would be perverse and unrealistic.

SADLY, THE PARTY'S CAPACITY TO change this dynamic is rather limited. As I've previously noted, Clinton missed the opportunity to clearly articulate a liberal national-security strategy and bestow upon the party a corps of recognized and respected speakers on the issue [see “Insecurity Blanket,” *TAP*, December 2004]. Generating new cadres from the institutional base of a congressional minority will be difficult, and the party doesn't seem especially inclined to try. People are busy (with good reason) combating Bush's plans to destroy Social Security, and congressional leaders are fo-

cused (again for understandable reasons) on issues that promise to pay dividends in the 2006 midterms.

Beyond Congress, the picture is much the same: Security is someone else's problem. New initiatives under way to train a new generation of progressive activists often offer civil liberties as a potential area of interest, but not national security or foreign policy. Of course civil liberties are important, but a strategy to ensure that the government doesn't go too far in combating terrorism only makes sense as part of a strategy that will ensure that the government also goes far enough. Liberals may think it should go without saying that we, too, want to keep America safe, but in practice it *doesn't* go without saying. A movement interested in preparing to defend the United States from its own security apparatus but not against terrorism is inviting the attack that it cares more about protecting terrorists than their victims. Worse, it deprives itself of the ability to cultivate people who will be able to articulate a progressive message on national security in the future.

The lack of credible national-security spokespeople who are willing to be partisan is a problem that's already severe. The Clinton administration, in part by choice and in part due to

circumstances (there had been no Democratic administration since 1980, and its foreign policy was not a stunning success), tended to draw its national-security personnel from academia or the ranks of the professionals in the foreign service, the intelligence community, and the military. This cultivation of professionals, as opposed to the hyper-partisanship of the Bush team, has had certain salutary effects in terms of policy. But it has also had drawbacks. Bush's key people—from Dick Cheney to Donald Rumsfeld to Condoleezza Rice and on down through the second and third tiers—came up through the ranks of specifically *Republican* policy circles, giving them the ability to connect their policy vision with a strong political one. These circles include experience inside the Bush Senior, Reagan, and even Nixon-Ford administrations, but also work on the Hill, where Republican ties to the defense-contractor lobby create incentives for members and staffers to get involved.

Democratic foreign-policy hands, by contrast, tend to see themselves as nonideological technocrats, and prefer to remain aloof from partisan battles, a tendency that reinforces and is reinforced by party operatives' dislike of the national-security issue. When out of power, they hang their hats at places like the Brookings Institution, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace—think tanks of the old school adverse to the rough-and-tumble of politics. Brookings' fellows, as one of the institution's staffers

explained to me, are discouraged from thinking of themselves and defining themselves in public as a specifically liberal, progressive, or Democratic group of thinkers, even though this is rather plainly what they are.

This official stance of nonpartisanship stands in sharp contrast to that of the foreign- and defense-policy groups at conservative think tanks like The Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute. Though these groups are officially nonpartisan for tax purposes, they make no bones about where they stand on the ideological spectrum. They produce not only a chorus of cheerleaders for Republican policies (and detractors of Democratic ones) but a reasonably consistent vision of international affairs that's explicitly linked to an overall conservative worldview. When self-conscious liberals avoid national security, and liberal national-security hands avoid an ideological self-conception, the public sees only a void that is all too often filled with outdated stereotypes, extreme and unrepresentative voices, and smears and caricatures propagated by the right.

The roots of this situation really do lie in the tumultuous late '60s and early '70s. But it has less to do with the "Vietnam syndrome," as is often supposed, than with the changes to the structure of the Democratic Party adopted by that era's reformers. The party as such—that is, the white men in the smoke-filled rooms—was essentially disbanded and reconceived as a collection of



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The upshot is that no one is charged with looking after a topic, like national security, that concerns everyone, rather than anyone in particular. There exists no major group in Washington that defines itself as both progressive and primarily concerned with the topics of foreign policy and security. Until this is changed, it will be hard for Democrats to engage with the subject as they must—at every level, and not merely in presidential campaigns. It will also be all but impossible to build a broad, thematic case on security policy—one that raises the way in which the right's tax-cut jihad at home starves the government of resources needed to fight the real one around the world, and questions the fitness of a movement with an ambivalent view toward theocracy at home to combat it abroad—rather than a laundry list of narrow, technocratic criticisms.

With a very few exceptions, congressional Democrats are not foreign-policy people, and foreign policy isn't what they spend time talking about, concentrating instead on domestic issues.

THAT SAID, THINGS ARE IMPROVING IN SMALL BUT REAL ways. The Century Foundation has grown increasingly involved in security policy over the past several years. The Center for American Progress, a progressive think tank in the Heritage-AEI mold, has been operating for somewhat more than a year now, albeit on a smaller scale than the right's outfits or the more established, less ideological foundations.

The basic elements are in place. In consultation with outside experts like Rand Beers, Ivo H. Daalder, Michele Flournoy, Jessica Matthews, Michael O'Hanlon, Susan Rice, and Peter Singer, the House Democrats endorsed a series of proposals for "Winning the War on Terror" in April of last year. When the Senate Democrats unveiled their top 10 agenda items for the new Congress on January 24, they came up with similar recommendations: Increase the Army's strength by 30,000 and the Marines' by 10,000 to help an overburdened military cope with the challenges of post-conflict reconstruction, while adding 2,000 new special-operations forces to take the battle to the terrorists. Democrats are proposing "additional funding for basic education programs to help nations provide a clear alternative to the madrassas that preach radical Islam," more money for democracy-building nongovernmental organizations in the Muslim world, and new public-diplomacy programs to counter America's increasingly terrible image in the world. The Nunn-Lugar expansions advocated in earlier progressive reports are part of the agenda, as are new funds for port and border security.

These developments could lay the groundwork for better days ahead, but there's one more big problem: Such efforts could come to little unless the party's politicians truly get on board. The

new Senate program could be the harbinger of a change, or it could, like last year's House proposal, be a mere false dawn. With a very few exceptions, congressional Democrats are not foreign-policy people, and foreign policy isn't what they spend most of their time talking about. "We're a domestic-policy institution," one Democratic Senate aide explained to me. "Maybe if 20,000 troops die [in Iraq], we'll do something," just as Congress eventually acted during the Vietnam War. During the 1990s, by contrast, congressional Republicans were active in the foreign-policy arena. They laid the groundwork for much of what became the Bush foreign policy by pushing the Iraq Liberation Act, forcefully arguing for more spending on missile-defense programs, criticizing and blocking the full implementation of the Agreed Framework with North Korea, and seeking to undermine the United Nations' legitimacy.

Congressional Democrats are far more timid. Democrats mounted a vigorous opposition to John Ashcroft's appointment as attorney general in 2001, driven by the opposition of feminist and civil-rights groups. But when Alberto Gonzales, whose role in creating a permissive environment for torture and abuse of detainees involved much more serious wrongdoing than anything Ashcroft stood accused of, was put forward as his replacement, Democrats offered "tough questions" and not much else.

Unfortunately, the strategy of evasion has some real merits from the perspective of the party's congressional leadership. The payoff for consistent engagement with national-security issues is purely long term, and most visible at the presidential level. In the short term, such engagement would distract attention from the Democrats' stronger issues and force them to play on an issue where they start at a disadvantage. But joining the battle is essential. Future presidential elections will almost certainly feature a prominent national-security debate, and sound policy ideas accomplish nothing unless they can be credibly and effectively communicated.

In 2004, Democrats tried, in essence, to substitute Kerry's personal history as a combat veteran for building a solid brand identity. Under the circumstances, it made some sense as a strategy, but it didn't work. And there are only so many decorated veterans available to nominate. If the party again tries to throw something together on the fly, it will most likely fail, once more leaving liberals scratching their heads and wondering what went wrong. The problem, however, is bigger than any one candidate or campaign, and there's no time like the present to start addressing it.

The president's inaugural address has served to highlight the steep gap between rhetoric and reality on Bush's "forward strategy of freedom," and it gives the Democrats an ideal opening to push for their ideas on this score, as does Bush's continued insistence on "staying the course" in Iraq without providing the military with the resources it needs to win. Getting off the path of least resistance and squarely addressing these issues is the party's best hope for the long term, and might do the country some good in the meantime. **TAP**

Culture & Books

"Parker's majestic biography is as much the story of the rise and fall of an intellectual tradition as it is of one man." —PAGE 62



Tell It!: Burt Lancaster as Elmer Gantry in Richard Brooks' 1960 film adaptation

CULTURE

THE GOOD BOOK

The America portrayed by Sinclair Lewis in Elmer Gantry used to be a distant memory. But the novel's surprising lessons are relevant again.

BY RICHARD BYRNE

IT HAS BEEN ALMOST 80 YEARS SINCE novelist Sinclair Lewis set his most iconic fictional creation, a hell-raiser turned hellfire preacher named Elmer Gantry, loose on an unsuspecting America. For a clergyman in his 70s, Gantry has proven to be remarkably hale and hearty. Op-ed writers and columnists lean continually on Lewis' parson to represent a uniquely American type: the fundamentalist hypocrite serving up corn pone and brimstone to promulgate a strict public morality.

The type was on its way to the margins in Lewis' day; the 1920s were when modernity won, if not in fact in the great

heartland, at least in the larger self-image of a nation gorging itself on jazz, burlesque, motorcars, and bathtub gin. But the type—the living, breathing Gantry, as it were—is now back with a vengeance.

Take, for instance, the open letter written to President Bush by fundamentalist educator Bob Jones III, president of Bob Jones University, on the day after the election. When Jones declares, "In your reelection, God has graciously granted America—though she doesn't deserve it—a reprieve from the agenda of paganism," and then argues that liberals despise the president "because they despise your Christ," he is channeling the call for a na-

tional "crusade" that Gantry delivers as the closing flourish of the novel: "... a crusade for complete morality and the domination of the Christian church through all the land. Dear Lord, thy work is but begun! We shall yet make these United States a moral nation!"

Elmer Gantry is sermonizing once again in the United States, and Lewis, once again, is relevant. He was, to be sure, an agnostic, and an intensely secular partisan whose rendering of the fundamentalist devout was brutal. But he was something else, too: He was a careful student and observer, and his method suggests a lesson for today's liberals as they grapple with these hard-shell literalists who are, incomprehensible as it may seem to them, their countrymen.

ELMER GANTRY BURST INTO AMERICAN bookshops in 1927 and became the year's best-selling novel. It also, as Mark Schorer observes in his 1961 biography of Lewis, faced "wholesale municipal bans—extended from Kansas City to Camden, from Boston to Glasgow." At that time, America was less than two years removed from the greatest clash between the forces of fundamentalism and secularism it had seen to that time, the 1925 Scopes "monkey trial." It was also on the cusp of an election in which religion and the public morals issue of the age, Prohibition, would play a major role.

Elmer Gantry is dedicated to Lewis' friend and booster H.L. Mencken, a writer who covered both the Scopes trial and the 1928 campaign between Republican Herbert Hoover and Democrat Al Smith. Looking back at Mencken's writing about that campaign today elicits a palpable shock of recognition. Update some context and swap Prohibition with gay marriage and Mencken might be filing from Cincinnati in November 2004 rather than Baltimore in November 1928:

I daresay the extent of the bigotry prevailing in America, as it has been revealed by this campaign, has astounded a great many Americans, and perhaps even made them doubt the testimony of their own eyes and ears. This surprise is not in itself surprising, for Americans of one class seldom know anything about Americans of other classes. What the average native yokel believes about the average city man is probably nineteenth-century untrue, and what the average city man believes about the average yokel is almost as inaccurate.... This campaign... has brought bigotry out into the open, and revealed its true proportion. It has shown that millions of Americans, far from being free and tolerant men, are the slaves of an ignorant, impudent, and unconscionable clergy.

Mencken's verbal pyrotechnics are rough stuff to our contemporary ears. His

mannerisms in that novel (though they later did, and responded with fury).

Elmer Gantry, on the other hand, was intended by its author to stir the pot from the get-go. Lewis earned that rumpus by pulling back the veil of America's tabernacles and revealing manifold sins: hucksterism, fakery, careerism, carnality, and, most damning of all, an explicit claim of a hollow core at the center of many preachers' own faith. An outraged clergy and public didn't take *Elmer Gantry* lying down. Schorer's biography notes that Lewis was "invited" to his own lynching in Virginia. In a more recent biography of the writer, *Rebel from Main Street*, Richard Lingeman relates that fundamentalist evangelist Billy Sunday "called on God to strike Lewis dead."

Sunday's uncharitable wish for Lewis' death is closely linked to one of the most

mersion into American religious experience that Lewis undertook before writing the novel. He moved to Kansas City, lived with preachers, attended multiple religious services each week, and amassed a large library on American religion. These efforts were augmented by weekly discussion meetings that the author held with a wide range of Kansas City ministers, which came to be known as Sinclair Lewis' Sunday School Class. Lewis used these meetings to grill clergymen on matters doctrinal and pastoral. The nitty-gritty info that Lewis gleaned is evident in the novel in moments such as this bull session between Baptist seminary students:

"Well, I know why I came here," said Don Pickens. "My dad sent me!"
 "So did mine!" complained Horace Carp. "But what I can't understand is: Why are any of us in an ole Baptist school? Horrible denomination—all these moldy barns of churches, and people coughing illiterate hymns, and long-winded preachers always springing a bright new idea like 'All the world needs to solve its problems is to get back to the gospel of Jesus Christ.' The only church is the Episcopal! Music! Vestments! Stately prayers! Lovely architecture! Dignity! Authority! Believe me, as soon as I can make the break, I'm going to switch over to the Episcopalians. And then I'll have a social position, and be able to marry a nice rich girl."

Lewis told a Kansas City church audience, "If God is striking agnostics down, then let him strike me down." Fifteen minutes later, he pointed out to the gathering that he was still standing.

sharp rhetoric flies in the face of the contemporary vogue for soft-pedaling any pungent talk about religion. Yet Mencken's America is precisely the one into which Lewis introduced his novel, and the author of *Elmer Gantry* proved to be at least as pugnacious as Mencken in dissecting American religion's role in public life.

Elmer Gantry drew its power from multiple wellsprings. Sinclair Lewis was among America's most controversial writers of that time, and his three previous novels published in that same decade—*Main Street* (1920), *Babbitt* (1922), and *Arrowsmith* (1925)—were immense critical and popular sensations. *Elmer Gantry*'s brusqueness and brutality also played a role in its success. *Main Street* and *Arrowsmith* leavened their deadly satire on small-town America and the medical profession, respectively, with powerful doses of idealism. America's businessmen—the main targets of *Babbitt*—were slow to catch on to Lewis' harsh indictment of their values and

notorious, and misunderstood, events in Lewis' public career. As Lingeman notes, Lewis gave a talk at a Kansas City church forum in which he dismissed the notion that God would strike down an agnostic for lack of belief. As he did so, he told those gathered that "if God is striking agnostics down, then let him strike me down." Fifteen minutes later, Lewis pointed out to the gathered audience that he was still standing. Newspapers inflated the incident into a tall tale that, says Lingeman, "portrayed the infidel Lewis as daring God to strike him dead as a publicity stunt." But such publicity, even before the book's release, helped to account for the splash that *Elmer Gantry* made in the United States.

BUT HERE'S THE INTERESTING QUESTION: Just what was Sinclair Lewis doing talking with a church group anyway, or preaching from midwestern pulpits, as he did numerous times in the year before he wrote *Elmer Gantry*?

The preaching was part of a total im-

mergence into American religious experience that Lewis undertook before writing the novel. He moved to Kansas City, lived with preachers, attended multiple religious services each week, and amassed a large library on American religion. These efforts were augmented by weekly discussion meetings that the author held with a wide range of Kansas City ministers, which came to be known as Sinclair Lewis' Sunday School Class. Lewis used these meetings to grill clergymen on matters doctrinal and pastoral. The nitty-gritty info that Lewis gleaned is evident in the novel in moments such as this bull session between Baptist seminary students:

"Yes, sir, the boys all been telling me what a dandy fine fellow you are, and what a corking athlete, and what an A-1 gentleman. They all say there's just one trouble with you, Elmer lad."

"Eh?"

"They say you're a coward."

"Heh? Who says I'm a coward?"

Judson Roberts swaggered across from the bed, stood with his hand on Elmer's shoulder. "They all say it, Hell-cat! You see it takes a sure-enough dyed-in-the-wool brave man to be big enough to give Jesus a shot at him, and admit he's licked when he tries to fight God!"

It is impossible to grasp, for instance, the appeal of today's Promise Keepers movement without understanding the relationship between religion and masculinity that Lewis depicts so skillfully here.

AT A MOMENT WHEN CREATIONISM has crept back into America's classrooms and the coded language of "values" has permeated the nation's political

discourse, renewed interest in the rhetoric employed by Lewis and Mencken to win an earlier war on fundamentalism in America is natural. Yet progressives will get only half the lesson of *Elmer Gantry* if they use this language without a modicum of self-education. Lewis grounded his attacks in an intimate knowledge of fundamentalism's strengths and weaknesses.

The astonishment of the media (including religion reporters) at the role that "values" played in the 2004 election—not to mention the self-flagellation among many liberals for their failure to "speak to" religious America—suggests that there is a huge learning curve to be mastered. Perhaps it's time for progressives to get back to the books, *Elmer Gantry* among them. **TAP**

Richard Byrne's writing has appeared in Foreign Policy, Washington Post Book World, Time.com, the Boston Phoenix, and New York Press.

BOOKS

THE FAT AND THE FIRE

GENERATION EXTRA LARGE: RESCUING OUR CHILDREN FROM THE EPIDEMIC OF OBESITY BY LISA TARTAMELLA, ELAINE HERSCHER, AND CHRIS WOOLSTON Basic Books, 272 pages, \$25.00

OUR OVERWEIGHT CHILDREN: WHAT PARENTS, SCHOOLS, AND COMMUNITIES CAN DO TO CONTROL THE FATNESS EPIDEMIC BY SHARRON DALTON University of California Press, 292 pages, \$24.95

CONSUMING KIDS: THE HOSTILE TAKEOVER OF CHILDHOOD BY SUSAN LINN New Press, 256 pages, \$24.95

FOOD POLITICS: HOW THE FOOD INDUSTRY INFLUENCES NUTRITION AND HEALTH BY MARION NESTLE University of California Press, 469 pages, \$29.95

THE WEIGHT OF IT: A STORY OF TWO SISTERS BY AMY WILENSKY Henry Holt, 203 pages, \$23.00

BY MELVIN KONNER

AHUMAN DISASTER IS UNFOLDING in front of our eyes: American kids and adults are relentlessly growing fatter and, consequently, sicker. But the disaster is not just the product of individual appetites; powerful institutions, private and public, have been complicit in creating and exacerbating the

problem. That, in a nutshell, is the message of these books, which together tell a story of abject national failure.

I come at this subject both professionally and personally. As a biological anthropologist and (nonpracticing) physician, I have taught and written about the biological basis of hunger and satiety and de-

voted years to developing a model of healthy diet and lifestyle. I also have direct experience with the problem: As a boy, I spent many not-so-happy hours in the "husky" boys' section at downscale department stores, and though I outgrew that chubbiness, I became overweight again in middle age, during my wife's long, unsuccessful battle with cancer. Since then I've lost the extra weight and worked hard to keep it down. So I've not only studied this problem; I've also been there.

Two of these books focus on obesity in children. *Generation Extra Large* is an easy overview, *Our Overweight Children* more substantive and thorough. *Consuming Kids* is broader, detailing corporations' increasingly aggressive marketing to children—not just bad food but toys, media, clothing, sex, violence, beer, and (yes, still) cigarettes. The author did some dedicated spying at marketing conferences, and what she learned will turn your stomach whether or not you are dieting.

Food Politics is a solid, important treatise. Taking the health effects as given, it details how food companies undermine public health and infiltrate institutions that are sworn to protect it. If, after Marxism's demise, you need evidence of the pervasive complicity of government in the amassing of wealth by a few to the detriment of the many, look no further. In a different vein, *The Weight of It* is a touching memoir of sisterhood, woven around the lifelong obesity of the author's much-loved sister and its eventual cure (I use the word advisedly) by gastric bypass surgery.

Concern about the growing public-health threat of obesity, called "epidemic" in two of the subtitles, is not misplaced. One imperfect but useful medical measure is the Body Mass Index (BMI): weight in kilograms (pounds over 2.2) divided by the square of height in meters (inches times 0.0254). Physicians often use a BMI of 25 as the cutoff for normal weight and 30 to separate overweight from obesity. By this definition, about a third of American adults are in each category. The 5 percent with BMIs over 40 are called morbidly obese. In its recommendations for children and adolescents, the federal government's Centers for Disease Control

(CDC) avoids the term “obese,” using instead “at risk for overweight” and “overweight” for children with BMIs, respectively, between the 85th and 95th and above the 95th percentile.

The death rate from all causes among the morbidly obese is double that of the non-overweight. A study in the December 23 *New England Journal of Medicine* followed more than 100,000 women for 24 years; death rates from heart disease and cancer, the leading and second-leading causes of mortality in the United States, were well predicted by BMI. “Even modest weight gain during adulthood,” the authors concluded, “was associated with a higher risk of death.” This study also challenged the “fat and fit” notion; inactive lean women had lower risks than active obese ones.

***A senior manager at one food company said,
“All our advertising is targeted to kids. You want
that nag factor so that seven-year-old Sarah is
nagging Mom in the grocery store.”***

This is just one study in one week in one leading journal, among thousands. Other research shows that weight loss, including by gastric bypass surgery, reduces the risk of diabetes and hypertension, and that dietary and lifestyle changes can reverse the clogging of arteries. The CDC assigns about 300,000 of the premature adult deaths in the United States each year to overweight, a number that rivals smoking deaths. The evidence for major health risks of obesity is, to put it modestly, decisive.

So much for adults. The CDC recommendations for children sound a ringing alarm. In addition to the risks already mentioned, the agency warns that gallstones, fatty degeneration of the liver, early maturation, sleep apnea, inadequate breathing, and orthopedic complications of the legs and feet are all more likely in obese children.

Confused about the varied definitions? Skeptical of the risks of overweight in the moderate range? It doesn't matter. Draw the line where you like, the trend is the

same: Adults and children are a lot fatter than they were 30 years ago, by any measure. The CDC's vintage percentile charts appear to be old, but the agency should continue using the same ones, or over the coming years the “normal” category will expand upward to include those at risk. By the official definition, the proportion of overweight (obese) children has tripled to 9 million, or 16 percent, since the mid-'70s. The change is readily seen even before age 2.

But in fact we don't even need obesity measures because we have a more ominous indicator: Type 2 diabetes, which not long ago was called “adult-onset” to distinguish it from Type 1, which usually strikes children. Both involve high levels of blood glucose, potentially leading to loss of sensation in the limbs, infection and amputa-

tion, kidney disease, and blindness.

But the two diseases are different: Type 1 is due to insulin deficiency, Type 2 to insulin resistance. And in some 90 percent of cases this resistance is caused by chronic obesity. Type 2, once rare in childhood, now beats Type 1 by 5 to 1 in pediatric clinics. One in 100 children have it, more than 200,000 nationally. Their problems are labor-intensive for pediatricians, whose clinics will be swamped—and that's before considering such consequences as high blood pressure, heart disease, and asthma.

WHY HAVE AMERICAN CHILDREN grown fatter and more vulnerable to serious illness? Bad food, no exercise. But behind these two causes lie many political tales.

First, the poor are fatter throughout life. They are ignorant of nutrition, and the food industry and its government allies keep them that way. The urban poor have no access to fresh fruits and vegetables because grocery stores that stock

them do not exist in their neighborhoods. And they are rightly afraid to let their children go out and play on dangerous streets; the kids sit at home in front of television sets through which the bad-food purveyors—not to mention those hawk-ing toys, clothes, entertainment, sex, and violence—wield their enormous media power. Add to this a cultural bias among the poor, stronger in some ethnic groups, in favor of overweight as a cushion against starving. One result is that New York's poorest neighborhoods have rates of diabetes approaching 15 percent.

But the overall epidemic cannot be laid at the door of the poor. In 1998, 26 percent of adults below the poverty line were obese, but so were 15 percent of those in the highest-income bracket, with average Americans in between. Trends are similar in all economic and ethnic groups, and, as Sharon Dalton puts it, “the obesity epidemic has ‘gone global’” across many cultural boundaries. We have a commanding lead—French researchers are alarmed that their 7- to 9-year-olds are as plump as ours were in the late '80s—but neither poverty nor anything uniquely American can explain more than a part of this dismal phenomenon.

Soft drinks, fast food, and a couch-potato lifestyle go a long way toward explaining the rest. These affect all levels of society, ethnic groups, and countries within the reach of Coca-Cola and McDonald's. These and other relatively new and increasingly pervasive aspects of our culture amount to a toxic environment. Seventy percent of the food industry's \$11 billion a year in advertising goes to convenience foods, candy, snacks, alcohol, soft drinks, and desserts; about 2 percent goes to fruits, vegetables, grains, and beans.

This cultural toxicity is deepening. Imagine, if you will, that minute traces of lead were found in fast food, or that HIV, at some very low risk level, could occasionally be transmitted in a soft drink. Imagine that five hours a day in front of a television or computer screen gradually caused some children to go blind, but one hour a day did not. What kind of response do you think such discoveries might get—from the media, from parents, from the government? Well, these

things do gradually cause diabetes, and diabetes causes blindness, kidney disease, and heart disease. Three-hundred-thousand excess deaths a year, 800 a day, a September 11 equivalent every four days. Where is the outcry?

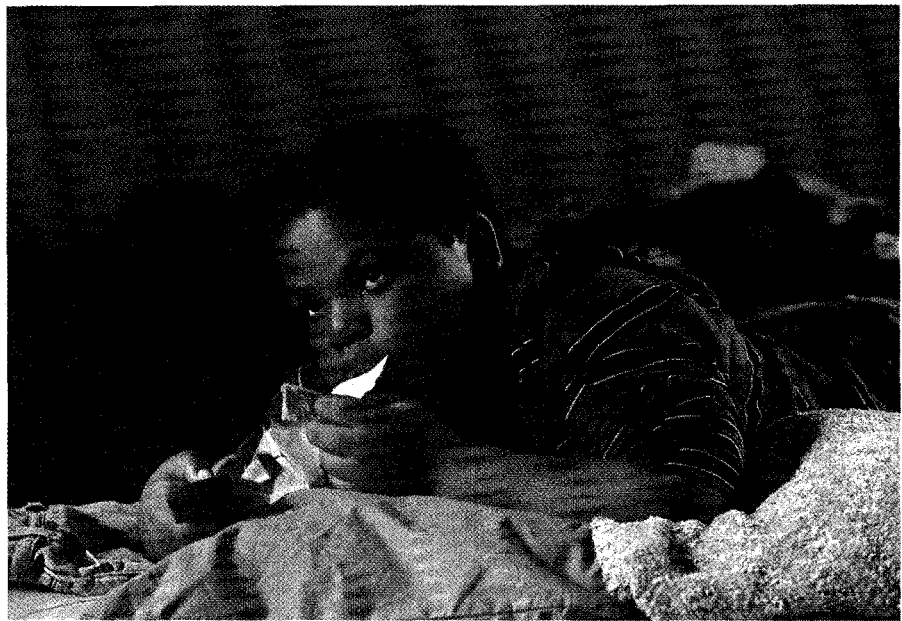
Instead, we have a toxic pact between industry and public institutions. For her very responsible book, Marion Nestle interviewed scores of knowledgeable people in the food industry, government, and academia. They told her many things, but not one would speak for attribution. How beholden they must be to, or how frightened of, those who control the trillion-dollar annual cash flow that agribusiness generates. The American Heart Association counts more than 50 food companies among its sponsors. The Food and Nutrition Board of the Institute of Medicine takes money from M&M Mars. Among the direct supporters of journals reporting nutrition research are Coca-Cola, Gerber, Nestlé/Carnation, Slim-Fast, and the Sugar Association.

Children are tragically vulnerable. Their schools literally push high-calorie, low-quality food through vending machines. Recess has been all but abolished in many schools, and physical education is pathetically inadequate. One of the conferences Susan Linn spied on issued a brief on marketing to "Kids 6-11 with a bull's-eye of kids ages 7-9. These kids are at a crossroads, with one foot in the kid world and one in the adult world." A foot in the adult world at 7 to 9?

It's science now. Research shows that "up to 46 percent of sales in key businesses that target children" are due to nagging. Parents are typed by vulnerability to children's whining and targeted accordingly. A senior manager for one food company said, "All our advertising is targeted to kids. You want that nag factor so that seven-year-old Sarah is nagging Mom in the grocery store" Lucy Hughes, an advertising executive, said, "If we could develop a creative commercial ... that encourages the child to whine ... then we're successful." To resist, marketers know, a parent would have to fend off hundreds of nags a month. Most cave.

The most chilling new trend is described in *Consuming Kids*: Schools have

gone into business with junk-food merchants. Ninety-eight percent of high schools and 43 percent of elementary schools have vending machines, and many get kickbacks from sales. Given our shameful underfunding of schools, educators are desperate. Some school districts are paid by commission. From *Generation Extra Large*: "In 1998, John Bushey, the executive director of school leadership for Colorado Springs School District 11, wrote a letter to the district pointing out that it was lagging far be-



Food for Thought: Imagine the outcry if these chips had traces of lead.

hind its goal to sell 70,000 cases of Coke products." Without such sales, "it wouldn't get the full benefits from Coke."

Tommy Thompson, until recently the health and human services secretary, has been in a public state of denial about the causes of obesity, much like South African President Thabo Mbeki's long refusal to acknowledge the link between HIV and AIDS. The same rejection of science, the same self-serving pomposity, the same dire public-health results. Touting his "Small Steps" campaign designed to cajole people into little lifestyle changes, Thompson sermonized, "First, we have to work hard to spread the gospel of personal responsibility." New guidelines published in January are an improvement, but they are still only guidelines—personal responsibility again—and they do not end the complicity.

Former Surgeon General David Satcher has commented—despite "a lot of respect for Secretary Thompson"—that "we need some big steps to deal with this ... A lot of people are going to die because of this epidemic. ... I don't think any epidemic can be stopped without major public commitment." The man who appointed Thompson did not count on the personal responsibility of voters to ensure his re-election, nor did he allow his opponent to outspend him on marketing the way snacks outspend vegetables. He

figured people needed encouragement, and spent hundreds of millions of dollars to get his countervailing message across to them.

Does personal responsibility count? Of course it does. People ask me how I lost 50 pounds in four years. I always say, "I took in fewer calories than I put out. If you do that, you will lose weight. If you take in more calories than you put out, you will gain weight. That's it. It's not even a law of medicine. It's a law of physics." But the diet industry can't make \$6 billion a year saying that, so the companies—including the well-regarded *Weight Watchers*—say all kinds of things that have never been scientifically tested. Are there tricks? Sure, and I know most of them. But they do not change the law, nor do they change its major corollary, which the same industry spends much

of those billions to obscure: Losing weight hurts.

You are, in effect, in the initial stage of starvation. Every cell in your body is screaming to your brain, "Find food!" There are so many fail-safe signal systems to generate hunger that I have lost count of them. You won't be hungry every minute, and you do get used to it, but it remains unpleasant. You may have headaches, stomachaches, sleep disturbances, difficulty concentrating, anxiety, or depression.

But I have worse news: *Maintaining* a desired weight is unpleasant for most of us, too. It still entails frequent hunger. Why? Because at that weight, most of us don't shut down the hunger signals. Our animal and human ancestors spent millions of years in conditions of fluctuating scarcity. We evolved to build fat in times of abundance, a buffer against the inevitable lean season. Now it never comes, and the great majority of successful dieters rebound. They eat until they are satisfied, and that puts on weight.

As for your children, you can supply the willpower during the decade or so that you control them. Just say no—to harmful food, to hours a day in front of TVs or computer screens, and to aggressively marketed toys and clothes they don't need. Eventually the whining will stop and they will form habits. That is called cultural transmission. Try it. It works.

But ultimately, "just say no" is not enough, any more than it is in the realm of sex. Our children need social support, and so do we, but we get the opposite. Linn says, "Let's ban marketing to children," and cites a number of countries that have. Certainly vending machines should be banned from schools and the literally sickening complicity between marketers and school administrators summarily ended. A wall is needed between the food business and governments local and national, but especially between corporations and regulators at the Food and Drug Administration and the Department of Agriculture. These agencies should become very aggressive in labeling, exposing, and teaching about bad food and about the sleazy marketing tactics that make children crave it. Schools

should be centers of health education, not vectors of food-borne illness.

As tough as this effort will be, we have to try, and the four books here that deal with the politics of food and consumption are full of good ideas. On an individual level, most of us know what to do but don't do it. Wilensky's account of her sister's happy transformation should help silence those who think that getting obese people to accept their bodies is an adequate solution. But most of us don't need drastic measures, just a lot of willpower and a little help from our culture. Stopping the culture—the corporations and their government allies—from working *against* us and our children is a vital step.

BOOKS

WITHIN OUR KEN

JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH: HIS LIFE, HIS POLITICS, HIS ECONOMICS

BY RICHARD PARKER Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 832 pages, \$35.00

BY WILL HUTTON

THE STORY OF OUR TIMES IS THE ongoing rise of American conservatism, and to read a biography of John Kenneth Galbraith is a salutary reminder of just how much ground liberalism has surrendered—and how much conservatism has gained. For a generation after Galbraith's publication of *The Affluent Society* in 1958, he was an economist, public intellectual, and political activist who influenced presidents as much as the man and woman in the street. He was a household name whose witty one-liners defined a liberal common sense that could challenge the conventional wisdom at home and abroad.

Galbraith has no obvious successor—the best indicator of the depths of the crisis American liberalism is currently plumbing. Paul Krugman is perhaps the best contemporary example of the economist and public intellectual prepared to get his hands dirty by descending into the bear pit of political debate in the service of the liberal cause, but he hardly defines anything close to a widely held and alternative common sense. Rather, he is the voice railing outside the gilded

Will we one day see a food-industry mogul follow the lead of a high executive from the tobacco industry and break down in tears on the witness stand as he contemplates the vast human damage he has done? I hope so. In the meantime, we should, literally and figuratively, cultivate our gardens, stay active, and, as always, guard our children from those who would harm them, however cleverly the harm is disguised. **TAP**

Melvin Konner is the author of The Tangled Wing: Biological Constraints on the Human Spirit, Becoming a Doctor, and seven other books. He teaches at Emory University.

corridors of the nonsenses that continue within; for all the telling Galbraith-like accuracy of his commentary, Krugman speaks as an outsider rather than as the authentic representative of a dominant current in American thinking.

Richard Parker's majestic biography is as much the story of the rise and fall of an intellectual tradition as it is of one man. It is a work of scholarship that manages to be a page-turner, as Parker brings to life both the man and the decades through which he lived, especially the 1960s. The retelling of how Galbraith understands American capitalism is formidable; at bottom Galbraith has always seen capitalism through the prism of power, in particular how corporations shape the environment in which they operate—a mismatch between reality and the power-neutral world described by free-market, so-called classical economists that is devastatingly wide but, as Galbraith would say, has been self-interestedly designed to obscure the truth.

Yet while Parker's book is a compelling reaffirmation of Galbraith's stature and the importance of his ideas, it left me cu-

riously unsatisfied in one respect: Although his account of Galbraith's rise to influence through the legacy of the New Deal, the Second World War, and the aftermath is accomplished, on the subsequent marginalization of both Galbraith and the tradition he represents, Parker is much less surefooted. He is perplexed by the rise of a set of economic theorems palpably false and obviously self-serving. Why couldn't rationality and good argument prevail? More on that later.

The languid, 6-foot-8 Galbraith arrived at Harvard in the late summer of 1934, just as daily events were exploding the theories that had purportedly explained how market economies tend to find their natural balance as long as government leaves well enough alone. For Harvard's then-tiny economics department, it was a moment of truth: What was to replace the tried and trusted orthodoxies? Two years later John Maynard Keynes was to publish his *General Theory*, offering an explanation of how economies could get trapped in depressions because, in essence, the price mechanism had no timely means of linking the decisions of savers and investors with the unexpressed demand for the unemployed to work. The only way to break the logjam was for the government to borrow the idle savings and spend them, thus creating the demand for work—and thus the readiness of the unemployed to supply it—that otherwise could not be expressed. It was the elegant justification for what the New Dealers were doing anyway, and for those who thought economics must serve the public interest—as Galbraith has done throughout his life—it quickly became the heart of an alternative worldview.

Parker's description of these early debates (as of subsequent economic arguments)—and Galbraith's visit to Cambridge, England to learn from the master himself, only to find him incapacitated through illness—is superb. But the radicalism of Keynes' ideas was suborned by classical economists who tried to relocate them within the free-market tradition—an exercise famously delivered by Sir John Hicks, who, as Parker says, later repudiated what he had written. The damage was done, and Keynes was partially tamed.

But there was another weakness to Keynesian thinking where Galbraith closed the gap, making his enduring contribution to economic thought: Keynes thought that if the economic system could be made to work properly, the behavior of companies was essentially a sideshow. This position had two weaknesses: It cast the study of company behavior—the theory of the firm—as a side dish of the main meal, but it also offered a bridgehead to the classical economists, who could continue to claim that whatever the system-wide weaknesses of their ideas, at least they worked at the level of the firm. Galbraith convinced a generation that those ideas were wrong.

Galbraith's two greatest books—*The Affluent Society* and *The New Industrial State*—are seamlessly linked by his insistence that the clue to the ongoing success of now prodigiously productive

manufacture where it was cheapest (Asia), thus creating a nominal U.S. trade deficit that in effect is with itself. Two-thirds of U.S. merchandise imports are by affiliates of U.S. companies. The large proportion of value added, however, is still created in the United States by the service sector of Galbraith's "technostructure." In short, a new and awesome hegemonic capitalism is being invented in front of our eyes, complete with its own ideology of liberty, supremacy of individual choice, and free markets—to which today's Republican Party is the happy and uncontested midwife.

Parker sees some of the international context in which American capitalism has developed, but lacks the intellectual ruthlessness to put it center stage. He is too much a creature of a still inward-looking liberalism. American conser-

The challenge, he showed, is to prevent corporate gigantism from trivializing human wants and to insist on the value of the public realm.

capitalism is corporations' need and ability to conjure up new wants to satiate. Value lies primarily in the capacity to create markets and new wants rather than in the sinews of pure manufacture, and so capitalist action moves to the service sector—in particular, to advertising, marketing, selling, and distribution. The public challenge is to prevent corporate gigantism from trivializing human wants, and to insist that the parallel prosperity of the public realm—from our parks to our schools—is no less central to our individual and social well-being.

In one passage Parker treats us to Robert Solow's withering attack on this thesis, but it is Galbraith who has stood the test of time. Indeed, if Democrats had thought hard enough about the implications, they could have foreseen the decline in blue-collar factory work and the accompanying rise in blue- and pink-collar service-sector work that Galbraith's vision portended, with the associated decline in old solidarities and the rise of a new individualism. Indeed, they could have gone a step further. American capitalism would

vatism's rise could never have taken place without the ease with which the United States has shaped the world economy to accommodate the forces Galbraith described, but there has been no liberal intellectual of Galbraith's stature to explain what has been happening and offer a different prospectus. To pursue public purpose at home, American liberals have to insist on different rules applying abroad—in particular, new constraints on free finance, the sovereignty of the capital markets, and the anything-goes attitude toward corporate governance. We need not just another Galbraith but a revived intellectual liberal tradition. Richard Parker has done us a great service in reminding us what we once had and what we have lost. I hope that in 50 years time another biographer can write an equally powerful book on Galbraith's yet-to-be-identified successor. **TAP**

Will Hutton is a columnist for *The Observer* and the author of *The State We're In* and *A Declaration of Interdependence*.

Mangling Franklin

BY ROBERT B. REICH

WHEN I APPEARED ON FOX NEWS' *THE BIG STORY* on February 4, anchor John Gibson asserted that Franklin D. Roosevelt anticipated George W. Bush's privatization plan, quoting FDR as saying in 1935 that Social Security "ought ultimately to be supplanted by

self-supporting annuity plans." I told Gibson that FDR couldn't have been referring to private accounts; he must have been talking about separate accounts of a sort we have today. Frances Perkins, FDR's labor secretary (we used to call her Saint Frances around the department), designed the system to be self-supporting. Each generation of workers would support the previous generation of retirees, forever.

But where had that Roosevelt quote come from? When I got back to my office, I checked. I found it in FDR's address to Congress on January 17, 1935. The question was how to pay for the Social Security benefits of those who were then too old to contribute payroll taxes and thereby qualify. Roosevelt proposed that the state and federal governments pick up the tab until the system was fully up and running. At that point, the government contributions would be "supplanted" by a "self-supporting" Social Security system. Here's the quote in full:

In the important field of security for our old people, it seems necessary to adopt three principles: First, non-contributory old-age pensions for those who are now too old to build up their own insurance. It is, of course, clear that for perhaps 30 years to come funds will have to be provided by the States and the Federal Government to meet these pensions. Second, compulsory contributory annuities, which in time will establish a self-supporting

system for those now young and future generations. Third, voluntary contributory annuities by which individual initiative can increase the annual amounts received in old age. It is proposed that the Federal Government assume one-half of the cost of the old-age pension plan, which ought ultimately to be supplanted by self-supporting annuity plans.

The voluntary contribution annuities FDR proposed for future generations eventually became IRAs and Keogh plans. But nowhere did FDR ever propose diverting part of the payroll tax to finance private accounts at the expense of Social Security. FOX gave Roosevelt's words an entirely different spin—in support of Bush's privatization plan.

Maybe it was just an honest mistake, I thought. Some lowly researcher at FOX had skimmed through FDR's speeches and didn't understand what he was really saying. But a Google check revealed the same "mistake" in a FOX News broadcast by Washington managing editor Brit Hume the day before. And John Fund repeated it on February 4 in a *Wall Street Journal* online column, before Gibson used it on me.

Of course, sometimes in the rush to get a story out, reporters and commenta-

tors parrot what they've heard others say without checking the truth of the original. So I phoned FOX to correct the record. A valiant watchdog group called Media Matters for America posted the FOX distortion on its Web site. Air America, the liberal radio network, criticized FOX about it.

At this point, any halfway self-respecting news organization would have publicly admitted error, or at least stopped airing the distortion. But a full five days later, on the February 9 edition of *FOX News Live*, anchor David Asman used the quote again. To add insult to personal injury, Asman used a news clip of me disagreeing with Gibson as an excuse to repeat FOX's distortion.

This is just one example of how the Republican propaganda machine is lying to the American people about Bush's plan for Social Security, just as it has lied about so much else. FOX News' many distortions are mirrored on other yell-television cable networks, on right-wing radio, and on the editorial pages of *The Wall Street Journal*. It's a formidable machine. *The American Prospect*, Media Matters, Air America, and others who are trying to set the record straight are peanuts by comparison.

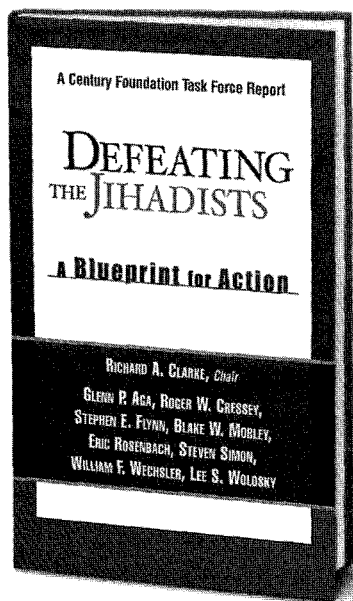
If Americans get the facts about Bush's plan, they will reject it out of hand. In fact, there's no Social Security crisis. In fact, privatization would divert money out of Social Security and create a crisis. In fact, it would drive up the deficit by trillions of dollars. In fact, it would deprive future Social Security recipients of a large chunk

of their benefits. (And, of course, FDR intended no such thing.)

These are the facts. But the nation continues to experience one of the gravest dangers to democracy it has ever endured, in the form of relentless and coordinated campaigns of distortion waged under the leadership of this White House. Let's hope the American people get the truth. **TAP**

***Did FDR really
endorse Bush's
Social Security
scheme? You're
crazy like a FOX
if you think so.***

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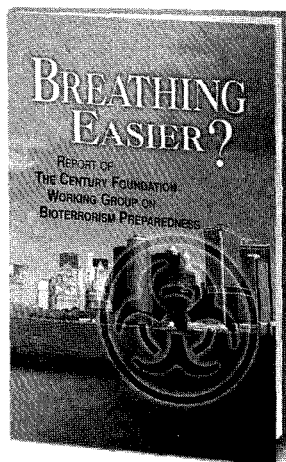
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